SONOMA COUNTY LIBRARY
3 7565 00911 321 7

CHATEAUBRIAND, FRANÇOIS-RE
ATALA; OR, THE LOVE AND
CONSTANCY OF TWO SAVAGES I
[C1930]
37565009113217 CENT

CLOSED STACKS
Chateaubriand
Atala

CENTRAL

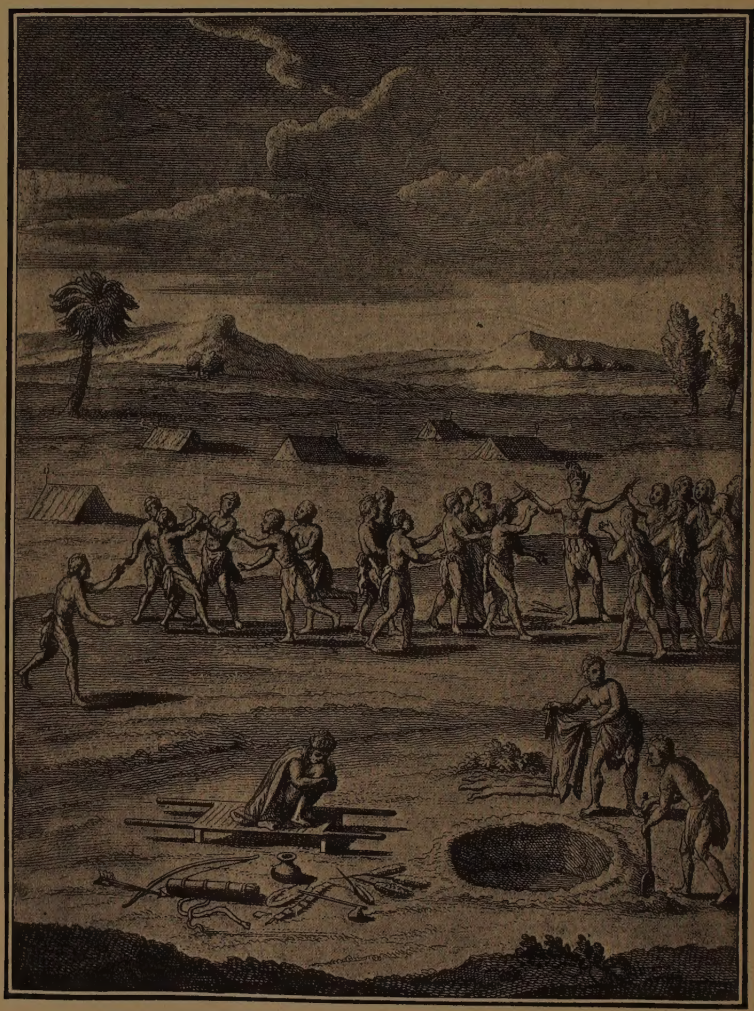
ATALA

THE STANFORD MISCELLANY

General Editor, MARGERY BAILEY

Consulting Editors

ERNEST BERNBAUM, University of Illinois
RONALD S. CRANE, University of Chicago
ALBERT L. GUÉRARD, Stanford University
PERCY H. HOUSTON, Occidental College
EDWARD M. HULME, Stanford University
GUY MONTGOMERY, University of California



(Artist and engraver unknown)

THE GAME OF THE WILLOW-STICK (see p. 37)

[An illustration of funeral games from one of Chateaubriand's sources, Lafitau's *Mœurs des sauvages* (1724)]

CS

ATALA

OR THE LOVE AND CONSTANCY OF TWO SAVAGES IN THE DESERT

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH
OF F. A. CHATEAUBRIAND BY
CALEB BINGHAM

EDITED BY

WILLIAM LEONARD SCHWARTZ
Associate Professor of Romanic Languages,
Stanford University

STANFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
STANFORD UNIVERSITY, CALIFORNIA

COPYRIGHT 1930 BY THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
OF THE LELAND STANFORD JUNIOR UNIVERSITY

FIRST PUBLISHED IN THE
STANFORD MISCELLANY, 1930

PRINTED AND BOUND IN THE UNITED STATES
OF AMERICA BY STANFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

TO MARK DEBTS TO
PROFESSOR BÉDIER
PROFESSOR CHINARD
PROFESSOR CLORAN

PREFATORY NOTE

This volume is the first to be published in the Stanford Miscellany, a collection devoted to the literature and social history of Europe and America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Few, if any, of the major classics will be reprinted; the design of the series is to provide from the minor classics and the curiosities or rarities of the time a background for the understanding of the greater works. For years the most interested reader has been obliged to depend upon quoted fragments and the opinions of authorities for his comprehension of the ideas and persuasions which lay behind the characteristic utterances of the romantic period, and persons without a command of European languages have had to forego acquaintance with works of extreme importance and singular appeal because editions in English have long since been distributed and not reissued. It is the hope of the editors that this collection, taken from dependable early issues of English and American works (or, in the case of European literature, from early translations) and presented in modern orthography, will increase the pleasures to be found in the age of sense and sensibility.

The *Atala* of Chateaubriand is the greatest artistic treatment of that nostalgic persuasion which hovered about the thinking of large numbers of persons in the eighteenth century—the feeling that the life of primitive man, being nearest to the state of original creation, must necessarily be an improvement on civilization. The current was probably derived from Arcadian dreams and the increasing sentimen-

talization of the deistic theory; it was certainly enlarged by the religious controversies, the political unrest, and the steadily growing scientific interests of the day; from it sprang the heated arguments of social and intellectual London, exemplified in the circles surrounding Dr. Johnson (who did not accept it), and the passionate convictions of Rousseau and the theorists of the French Revolution (who did). In literature, the theme of the "noble savage" began with Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* in 1688, absorbed much of the reader's interest in *Robinson Crusoe* and its countless progeny of imitations, influenced many poets and dramatists—and most poetasters—and served as letter of introduction for such dissociate conceptions as the upbringing of Paul and Virginia, Byron's dreams of elemental piratical freedom, Mary Shelley's innocent monster, and the ingenuous exaltations of Uncle Tom.

M. B.

Stanford University, California
April 15, 1930

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 1

Bingham's "Atala":

Original Title Page 11

Prologue 13

Recital 20

The Hunters 20

The Husbandman 56

The Drama 67

The Funeral 85

Epilogue 93

Chateaubriand's Preface 104

Bibliographical Notes 113

INTRODUCTION

The author of *Atala,* François Auguste René de Chateaubriand, was born at Saint-Malo, Brittany, in 1768. The youngest of a family of ten, he passed his childhood by the sea, neglected by his parents. The noble house of the Chateaubriands had quite lost favor and fortune, and to offset these reverses Chateaubriand's father had gone to sea as a boy and was now engaged in fitting out ships to trade with Newfoundland, Africa, and the West Indies, one of the few forms of commercial enterprise in which a French noble might then engage. Under these circumstances, François-René was trained in the schools of Dol and Rennes to become a cadet in the Royal Navy. But since, when Chateaubriand was about to receive his commission, the American war of independence had just closed, he impatiently gave up the idea of entering the navy in a time of peace and rejoined his family at the lonely manor house of Combourg, intending to become a priest and missionary, as he said in his memoirs. Two years of adolescence were passed in this gloomy place, under the domination of a moody, despotic father but plunged in wild imaginations, in which his favorite sister Lucile shared. However, Chateaubriand recoiled at the prospect of spending several years in training for the ministry, and his next idea was to join the army and leave for the French establishments at Pondicherry in India. Such was not his father's will; he bought his son a commission and sent him to join the Navarre regiment as a second lieutenant in 1786. His father died a year later, leaving François-

René living in Paris in a ferment of the new philosophical and critical ideas, being received at Court, and going out in society. By the spring of 1790 the young soldier had large debts of honor, which he tried to settle by the sale of silk stockings to his fellow-officers. Then, by good fortune, he met one of the lights of the age, Malesherbes, a former minister of Louis XVI's, and was encouraged by him in the idea of exploring the United States. As early as 1789 the Chevalier de Panat noted that Chateaubriand had already planned an attempt to discover a Northwest passage.

Sailing on the brig "Saint-Pierre" of 160 tons on April 8, 1791, the author of *Atala* landed in Baltimore on July 10, after a voyage that had lasted three months. François-René had prepared himself for this long-premeditated journey by the study of botany and the accounts of other travelers, and we know that he carried with him at least a letter of introduction to General Washington from the Marquis de la Rouerie. Certainly, a young man could not have left France in a pessimistic mood with such plans in mind! Then again, Chateaubriand had also become acquainted with the ideas of Rousseau and had embraced the prevailing optimistic view of the noble savage and the excellence of man in the state of nature.

His stay in America lasted until the tenth of December, when he sailed back from Philadelphia after having heard of the flight of the King and his arrest at Varennes. M. Joseph Bédier was the first critic to attempt to reconstitute in terms of time the itinerary of Chateaubriand's travels in America, and his work has been successfully continued by Professor Gilbert Chinard. It now seems probable that, after meeting Washington at Philadelphia, Chateaubriand went to New York and Boston, back to New York, and up the

Hudson to Albany. He left this place with a couple of horses and a Dutch guide who spoke several Indian dialects, to proceed by the Iroquois trail along the Mohawk River to Niagara Falls. Here, in an attempt to descend to the foot of the cataract, Chateaubriand broke an arm in a fall from the Indian ladder, and was cared for in a redskin encampment for twelve days. He had already given up the Northwest passage. We do not know how Chateaubriand spent the remaining three months of his stay in America. "My guide, the Dutchman, refused to accompany me beyond the Falls," he wrote in the *Mémoires d'Outre-tombe*. "I paid him off and joined some traders who were leaving to go down the Ohio. Before leaving I took a glance at the Canadian lakes." Certainly the author of *Atala* did not come north along the Mississippi to Niagara from the Florida region, which included for him "the states of Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, and Tennessee"; nor could he have gone south to Pittsburgh, Natchez, or Nashville because of the fierce Indian wars being waged in 1791 across the Dark and Bloody Ground. Of Chateaubriand's *Voyage en Amérique,* published in 1827, Chinard says that ninety per cent of the description of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers found therein was borrowed from Imlay's *Topographical Description of the Western Territory of North America* (1792); and Bédier had pointed out that the Florida landscapes in the same work were adapted from John Bartram's *Description of East Florida* (1791). This does not mean, however, that the landscapes and Indian customs described in *Atala* are mere figments of Chateaubriand's imagination. On the contrary, he only reproduced what the most reputable geographers of his time believed was the state of things on the banks of the Mississippi in the year 1726. The author of

Atala was an industrious reader, and could have quoted sources for all of the more extraordinary statements in this book.

Nevertheless, Chateaubriand saw fit to declare in his preface to the revised edition of 1805 that his story had been "written in the wilderness and in the huts of the savages." Though this is not literally true, we may grant that for the first time a Frenchman gifted with the highest powers of feeling and expression had been privileged to live in the virgin forests of America.

Chateaubriand returned to Europe to pass the next eight years in sorrow and exile. This was a period of privation in which he had constant occasion to contrast the state of affairs in France and England with the past idyllic days in America. He joined the Royalist émigré army, to be wounded and catch the smallpox in Flanders. Thence he made his way by short stages to England, where he reached London (1793) in shaken health but with the firm resolve to live by his pen. Life at length became impossible in the great city, and, though Chateaubriand now felt the melancholy and perplexity which he later expressed in his character René, he was ready to stoop to accept a post as a French master in the boys' school at Beccles in Suffolk, where he was nicknamed "Monsoor Shatterbrain"! In the country, however, he had leisure once more. He rode about giving conversation lessons to the young ladies in the region, and after a fall from his horse even became for some time a guest in the neighboring parsonage of Bungay. The Reverend Mr. Ives, as Chateaubriand tells us, was a scholar who had himself traveled in America, "who loved to talk of his travels, to listen to my stories and talk of Homer and Newton." He undoubtedly possessed useful books about the

United States and Canada, and also a daughter of fifteen, the blonde Charlotte. Before long she was in love with the young Frenchman, and ultimately he had to confess that he was already married and that religion prevented their union. (In March, 1792, soon after his return from America, Chateaubriand had married a woman of wealth at the prompting of his family.) Here, in real life, we meet "the essential theme of *Atala, René, Les Natchez, Les Martyrs,* and *Les Aventures du dernier Abencerage,*" Chateaubriand's other prose poems. But at this tragic moment, his first book, the skeptical and rational *Essai historique sur les révolutions* (1797) was being printed in London, whither the young author departed. Life thereafter became easier for him, and he began work on a long romance, the story of the Natchez rising, not published until 1826, in which the tale of Atala was to figure. In 1798 the death of his mother and sister restored his Christian faith: "I wept and I believed," said Chateaubriand. He now began the writing of his monumental apology for Christianity, *Le Génie du Christianisme,* which was to have such an immense influence on the romantic movement in France. Now *Atala* was to be incorporated in this work as an illustration of missionary labors, and when Chateaubriand was free to return at last to France, in 1800, he brought this part of the manuscript of *Les Natchez* with him. He changed his mind, however, when some of his proof-sheets went astray, and published *Atala* separately in 1801.

Atala made its author immediately famous, but the publication of *Le Génie du Christianisme* in the following year made Chateaubriand great—a writer to be saluted by Théophile Gautier and the romantic poets as "the enchanter," "the sachem of romanticism in France," the man who had

"restored the Gothic cathedral," "reopened the great closed out-doors," "invented modern melancholy." Napoleon sent him to Rome as a secretary of embassy, but the execution of the Duc d'Enghien revolted Chateaubriand and restored him to letters. He visited the East and the Holy Land, published a prose epic, *Les Martyrs ou le triomphe de la religion chrétienne* (1807), and began the *Mémoires d'Outre-tombe* that were to be published after his death. The restoration of the monarchy brought Chateaubriand back into political office and added to his honors. He was named a peer, was made ambassador at Berlin (1821) and London (1822), became minister of foreign affairs for two years, and at length was ambassador at Rome (1828). After the Revolution of 1830, the author of *Atala* retired from public life, to be idolized in the drawing-room of Mme de Récamier until his death in 1848.

Atala, ou les amours de deux sauvages dans le désert, as a story, we know to be new in neither subject nor setting, but it was new in the sense that Chateaubriand's genius had infused value into the barren theme of sentimental experiences in foreign lands; this by the splendid setting in which he placed a tale of passionate love, the calm wilderness being his background for the storms of the heart, and by "his opposition of the simplicity of the savage and the complex feelings of the civilized man" (Chinard). Again, although we maintain that *Atala* is not essentially untrue to what is known of Indian life at the time and place where the tale is unfolded, the theme is not entirely foreign to the average reader. The protagonists, Chactas and Atala, both voice at times the sentiments of Chateaubriand in his own language, while Father Aubry is a somewhat unorthodox priest ideal-

ized by the enthusiasm of a converted author. This characteristic helps to keep the story alive, for the truest of novels with a foreign setting will always prove a failure when its *dramatis personae* think and act in ways beyond the conception of the average man. As Chateaubriand himself puts it, "had I always used an Indian style, *Atala* would have been Hebrew for the reader." Although no one can point to specific instances in English literature where *Atala* has been imitated, the story still remains the first artistic triumph of a genre in which the nineteenth century has excelled with the writings of Loti, Kipling, and Conrad. It is therefore significant in English literature and fully deserves to be made accessible to the reader who does not know French.

We have a published letter from Chateaubriand to the Reverend Bence Sparrow dated December 11, 1802, in which he mentions the receipt of two British translations of *Atala,* but these versions are rare and inaccessible.[1] The author of *René* says he had heard of an American translation issued in Philadelphia before 1805; in reality the story had been translated and published by Caleb Bingham, at Boston, in 1802. These translations were all reprinted several times during the first half of the nineteenth century, with the result that little attention was ever paid by English readers to Chateaubriand's slight revision of the text in 1805. For historical reasons, it has seemed appropriate to reprint *Atala* in the Stanford Miscellany from Bingham's early translation made for Americans.

[1] *Atala.* Translated from the French (12mo. 3*s.* 6*d.* London, Ridgway, July, 1801); *Atala or the Amours of Two Indians in the Wilds of America* (London, 1802). Both are unsigned.

Caleb Bingham, at the time in question, was a well-known figure in the New England world of books. Born in Salisbury, Connecticut, in 1757, after graduating from Dartmouth College in 1782 Bingham taught in Boston, collected and sold books at No. 44, Cornhill, and compiled a number of unusually popular schoolbooks. That he was also interested in French literature is evidenced by the translations from Berquin and Buffon, and a tale, "The Victim, an Indian Story, by Bossu," which appeared in his manual of elocution, *The American Preceptor* (1794), of which some 650,000 copies were sold in the course of time. Bingham's popular *Columbian Orator* (1797), to look into only one other of his schoolbooks, contains two harangues by Buonaparte, and the address of welcome to Franklin delivered by Abbé Fauchet in the name of the Commune of Paris.

If the Boston translation of *Atala* had the good fortune to be sponsored by a well-known American, we may add that Bingham also took the liberties with the text which he presented to the American public that were customary in his time. The long paragraphs characteristic of Chateaubriand's poetical prose were divided and shortened, some of the boldest figures of speech were suppressed, and the erotic or physiological element was reduced to a degree that would startle no one. Thus the original subtitle, *les Amours de deux sauvages,* was altered to read "the Love and Constancy of Two Savages." Elsewhere Bingham substituted familiar Indian words such as tomahawk, wampum, and war whoop in many places where Chateaubriand had described Indian life in the vocabulary of classical French. A score of slips and blunders do not destroy the utility of Bingham's version; notes will be found in this edition to correct these de-

fects. By the same means, the effort has been made to neutralize a more serious flaw, Bingham's wilful denaturing of the Catholic dogmas to which Chateaubriand had given expression. Though one cannot deny that these emendations probably promoted the immediate popularity of the American *Atala* in its own day, the modern reader cannot find edification in this extraordinary "Advertisement," with which we take leave of Bingham and his work:

"As this Book was evidently written with a view to promote the cause of christianizing and civilizing heathen nations, and has a special regard to our tawny brethren of the Western wilds, the Translator flatters himself, that, while he has respect to pecuniary recompense, he shall render some little service to mankind by the publication.—Boston, April, 1802."

W. L. S.

ATALA;

OR THE

LOVE AND CONSTANCY

OF

Two Savages in the Desert.

Translated from the FRENCH *of* F. A. CHATEAUBRIAND,
BY CALEB BINGHAM, A. M.

[Published according to Act of Congress.]

BOSTON:

PRINTED BY *DAVID CARLISLE,*

For CALEB BINGHAM, No. 44. CORNHILL

1802.

ATALA

PROLOGUE

France formerly possessed, in North America, a vast empire, which extended from Labrador to the Floridas, and from the shores of the Atlantic to the remotest lakes of Upper Canada.

Four great rivers, having their sources in the same mountains, divided these immense regions; the river St. Lawrence, which loses itself in the East, in the gulf of its own name; the river of the West, which empties itself into unknown seas; the river Bourbon, which runs from South to North, and falls into Hudson's Bay; the Meschaceba[1] which runs from North to South, and empties into the Gulf of Mexico.

This last river, through a course of more than a thousand leagues, waters a delightful country, which the inhabitants of the United States call *New Eden,* and to which the French have left the soft name of Louisiana. A thousand other rivers, tributary to the Meschaceba—the Missouri, the Illinois, the Akanza, the Ohio, the Wabash, the Tennessee, etc.—enrich it with their slime and fertilize it with their waters. When all these rivers are swelled by the rains and the melting of the snows, when the tempests have swept over the

[1] "The true name of the Mississippi" (C). The River Bourbon is now named the Nelson. [Chateaubriand's footnotes and those of the translator, Bingham, are given in quotation marks and followed by the initial "(C)" or by the word "Translator."]

whole face of the country, Time collects from every source the trees torn from their roots. He fastens them together with vines; he cements them with rich soil; he plants upon them young shrubs, and launches his work upon the waters. Transported by the swelling flood, these rafts descend from all parts into the Meschaceba. The old river takes possession of them, and pushes them forward to his mouth, in order there to form with them a new branch. Sometimes he raises his mighty voice in passing between the mountains, expanding his waters, overflowing the loftiest trees, those colonnades of the forest, and deluging the pyramids of the Indian tombs. This is the Nile of the deserts. But in scenes of nature, elegance is always united with magnificence; and while the middle current wafts towards the sea the carcasses of pines and oaks, you may see all along each shore, floating islands of pistia[2] and nenuphar, ascending the river by the force of contrary currents; the yellow blossoms of which rise into the appearance of little pavilions. Green serpents, blue herons, flamingoes,[3] young crocodiles, embark as passengers on board these vessels of flowers; and the little colony, displaying to the winds its golden sails, gently glides towards the shore, and sleeps securely in some retired creek.

From the mouth of the Meschaceba to its junction with

[2] Cf. Bartram, *Travels* (Dublin, 1793, p. 88), whose description of the Saint John's River in Florida is quoted by Cloran: "I set sail early, and saw this day vast quantities of the *Pistia stratiotes*, a very singular aquatic plant. It associates in large communities or floating islands . . . . which are impelled to and fro, as the wind or the current may direct . . . . we also see them completely inhabited and alive with crocodiles, serpents, frogs, otters, crows, herons, curlews, jackdaws, etc."

[3] Chinard points out that the flamingo is mentioned in Casteby's *Histoire naturelle de la Caroline, de la Floride et des îles Bahamas*, Vol. I, p. 75.

the Ohio, one continued picture covers its surface. On the western shore, savannas open to view as far as the sight extends. Their waving verdure, as the prospect stretches, seems to reach the azure vault of heaven, where it wholly disappears. In these boundless meadows are seen straying droves of three or four thousand[4] wild buffaloes. Sometimes a bison, borne down with years, cuts through the waves, and lands upon some island of the Meschaceba, to sleep quietly among the high grass. By his forehead, ornamented with two crescents, and his grisly beard, you would take him for the bellowing river god who casts a look over the waters and seems satisfied with the wild productions which its shores so abundantly yield.

Such is the scene on the western shore; but it suddenly changes on the opposite side and affords an admirable contrast. Bending over the banks of the river, forming into little clusters upon the tops of the rocks and upon the summits of the mountains, scattered through the valleys, trees of every shape, of every color, and of every perfume mingle and grow up together, rearing their tops to the clouds.[5] Wild vines, such as begonias and coloquintidas,[6] entwine together at the roots of the trees, climb up the trunks, creep to the extremity of the branches, and shoot from the maple to the tulip, from the tulip to the elm, exhibiting the appearance of a thousand grottoes, a thousand alcoves, a thousand piazzas. It often happens that these *lianas,*[7] in wandering from

[4] In later editions of *Atala,* Chateaubriand mentions three or four buffaloes.

[5] Chinard refers the skeptic to Carver, *Voyage dans les parties intérieures de l'Amérique, septentrionale,* (1793) Vol. I, p. 31.

[6] Coloquintidas, doubtless the wild squash (Cloran).

[7] "A species of vines, or climbing plants" (Translator).

tree to tree cross branches of rivers, actually forming arches and bridges festooned with flowers. In the midst of these massy columns, the superb magnolia elevates its immovable cone. Covered with its white roses, it reigns supreme over all the forest and has no rival but the palm tree, which gently waves its verdant branches near the other's lofty top.

A multitude of animals, placed by the hand of their Creator in these delightful retreats, diffuse life and enchantment through the whole. From the skirts of the groves are seen bears, intoxicated with grapes,[8] reeling upon the branches of the elms; flocks of caribou bathing in a lake; black squirrels playing among the thick foliage. Mocking birds and Virginia pigeons of the size of a sparrow descend upon the grass plats painted with strawberries. Green paroquets with yellow heads, red cardinals, and purple woodpeckers climb, after many times encircling, to the tops of the cypresses. Humming-birds sparkle upon the jessamine of the Floridas; and the bird-catching serpents hiss, as they swing suspended from the leafy domes, resembling the twining lianas.

If all is silence and repose in the savannas on the other side of the river, here, on the contrary, all is movement and murmur. Strokes of the beak against the trunk of the oaks, the rustling of beasts which hurry through the woods, browsing, and grinding between their teeth the seeds and stones of various fruits, the roaring of the waters, the feeble

[8] M. J. Chénier and other critics refused to believe in these drunken bears. Therefore, in a note to Vol. IV of *Le Génie du Christianisme*, Chateaubriand gave page references to Carver, to Bartram, to *Topographical Description of the Western Territory of North America* by Imlay, and to *Histoire et Description générale de la Nouvelle-France*, by Charlevoix.

groanings, hoarse bellowings, and soft murmurings fill these deserts with a wild and pleasant harmony. But when a breeze begins to animate these solitudes, to put in motion all these floating bodies, to confound all these masses of white, azure, green, and red, to blend all colors, unite all murmurs, then there proceed from the recesses of these forests such noises, and the spectator is presented with such a view, as it would be in vain for me to attempt to describe to those who have never traversed over these primitive fields of nature.

After the discovery of the Meschaceba by Father Marquette and the unfortunate La Salle,[9] the first Frenchmen who established themselves at Biloxi[10] and at New Orleans made a treaty of alliance with the Natchez, an Indian nation whose power was considered mighty throughout all these regions. Private injustice, revenge, love, and all the passions, one after the other, deluged in blood this land of hospitality. There was among these savages an old man named Chactas,[11] who, on account of his age, his wisdom, and his knowledge of men and of things, was the idol and the patriarch

[9] The first edition, by an error that was immediately corrected by Chateaubriand, mentioned Father Hennepin in place of Marquette (1637–1675). This Jesuit missionary made the river generally known by the account of his descent of the stream one hundred and thirty-two years after De Soto's discovery. La Salle (1640–1687) was killed by one of his own followers on his second journey to the mouth of the river.

[10] Eighty miles northeast of New Orleans, a French settlement founded in 1699, which takes its name from an Indian tribe.

[11] "Harmonious voice" (C). Bingham spelled the name of this character "Chactaw," after the name of the well-known tribe of Indians, but the familiar form used by Chateaubriand has been restored throughout this edition.

of the desert. He had, like all other men, purchased wisdom by his sufferings. Not only the forests were filled with his misfortunes, but he carried them even to the shores of France. Confined to the galleys at Marseilles by cruel injustice, restored to liberty, and introduced to the court of Louis XIV, he had conversed with all the great men of that renowned age; had assisted at the feasts of Versailles, at the tragedies of Racine, at the funeral orations of Bossuet; in a word, it was there that the savage had viewed civil society in its highest pitch of splendor.

After many years, having returned to the bosom of his country, Chactas there enjoyed repose. Nevertheless, heaven sold him, still dear, this favor; the old man became blind. A young girl accompanied him in solitude, as Antigone guided the steps of Œdipus upon Mount Cytheron, or as Malvina conducted Ossian to the tomb of his fathers.[12]

In spite of the numberless injuries which Chactas had experienced from the French, he loved them. He always remembered Fénelon, whose guest he had been, and he wished to have it in his power to render some service to the countrymen of that virtuous man. For this a favorable opportunity presented itself. In 1725 a Frenchman named René, driven by passions and misfortunes, arrived at Louisiana.

He proceeded up the Meschaceba as far as Natchez, and requested to be received as a warrior among that nation. Chactas having questioned him, and finding him fixed in his

[12] Antigone, in Greek legend, daughter of Œdipus, the unwitting murderer of his own father, followed him into exile over the mountains of Cytheron, after he had blinded himself. Ossian, in legend, was a Scottish singer of the third century. He became blind and was guided by Malvina, his daughter-in-law.

resolution, adopts him as his son, and gives him for a wife a young woman of the tribe, called Celuta. Soon after the nuptials, the Indians prepare themselves for a grand beaver hunt.

Chactas, though blind, on account of the respect which the people of the forest bear to his name, is designated by the council of sachems[13] as the commander of the party. The prayers and fasts commence; the jugglers interpret the dreams; the Manitous[14] are consulted; the lungs of a moose are burned, and some examine whether they crackle in the flames, in order to learn the will of the genii. Finally, after having eaten the consecrated dog, they set out upon their enterprise. René is one of the company.

By the force of the contrary currents, the canoes ascend the Meschaceba and enter the channel of the Ohio. It being in autumn, the delightful plains of Kentucky unfold to the astonished eyes of the young Frenchman.

On a moonlit evening, while all the savages lie sleeping upon the bottoms of their canoes and the Indian fleet is pressed forward by a gentle breeze, René, alone remaining awake with Chactas, requests of him a recital of his adventures. The old man consents to gratify his curiosity; and seating himself by his side, on the stern of his periagua,[15] thus mingles his voice with the murmuring of the waves, surrounded on every side by a solitary waste.

[13] "Old men or councillors" (C).

[14] "Household gods" (Translator).

[15] *Periagua*, in the *New English Dictionary:* "another form of piragua or pirogue. A dug-out canoe."

RECITAL

THE HUNTERS

It is a singular destiny, my dear son, which brings us together in this wilderness. In thee I behold a civilized man who makes himself a savage; in me thou seest a savage man, whom the great Spirit, as appears evident from his plans,[16] would have civilized. Entering on the career of life at the two opposite extremes, thou art come to repose thyself in my place, and I have been situated in thine.

Thus we must have had objects in view which were totally different. Who has gained or lost the most by this change is known only to the genii, the least wise among whom possesses more knowledge than all the men in the world united.

At the next moon of flowers[17] it will be seven times ten snows and three snows more[18] since my mother gave me to the world on the banks of the Meschaceba. The Spaniards had just begun to make settlements at the bay of Pensacola, but no white person yet inhabited Louisiana.

I had hardly numbered seventeen fallings of the leaves when I marched with my father, Outalissi the warrior, against the Muscogules,[19] a powerful nation of the Floridas.

[16] Chateaubriand's text reads: "I do not know for what reason."

[17] "Month of May" (C).

[18] "Snow for a year; seventy-three years" (C).

[19] This branch of the Creek Indians is also named Muskogee. The tribe, as Bédier pointed out, is fully described by Bartram.

We joined our allies, the Spaniards, and a battle was fought upon one of the branches of the Mobile.

Neither Areskoui[20] nor the Manitous were propitious. The enemy were triumphant. My father was slain in the engagement, and I was twice wounded in his defense. Oh, that I had descended to the land of shadows, that I might have escaped the miseries which awaited me on earth! But the spirits had ordained otherwise; and I was led away by the remaining fugitives to St. Augustine.

In this town, lately built by the Spaniards, I ran the risk of being carried off to work in the mines of Mexico. But an old Castilian named Lopez, touched with my youth and simplicity, offered me an asylum, and introduced me to a sister with whom he lived as a bachelor. This worthy couple imbibed for me sentiments of the most tender regard. They took the greatest care of my education; and procured me the best instructors in the various branches of science.

But after having passed thirty moons in this manner, I began to be disgusted with social life. I grew pale and emaciated. Sometimes I stood for whole hours immovable, contemplating the far distant forests, rising into mountains to the clouds. Sometimes they found me seated on the banks of a river, regarding its gentle current in melancholy silence. I painted to myself the woods through which this stream had passed, and my soul longed for solitude.

Being unable any longer to resist the desire of returning to the desert, I appeared one morning before Lopez in my savage dress, holding in one hand my bows and arrows, and in the other my European garments. These I returned to my generous benefactor, at whose feet I fell, shedding a torrent

[20] "God of War" (C).

of tears, accusing myself of ingratitude, and stigmatizing my name with opprobrious epithets. At length I cried, "Oh, my father, thou thyself knowest that unless I enter again upon my wandering life after the Indian manner, I certainly shall die."

Lopez, struck with astonishment, would have dissuaded me from my purpose. He represented to me the risks I should run, of falling into the hands of the Muscogules, from whom I had so narrowly escaped. But seeing I was resolved to encounter every danger, clasping me in his arms, with tears in his eyes, he exclaimed, "Go, magnanimous child of nature! enjoy this invaluable independence of man, which Lopez has no wish to rob thee of. Were I a few years younger, I would myself accompany thee to the desert (where I also have a sweet remembrance) and restore thee to the arms of thy widowed mother.

"When thou art in the forests, think sometimes of that old Spaniard who afforded thee hospitality; and recollect often that duty requires of thee to love thy fellow-creatures; in favor of which principle, the first experience thou hast had of the human heart has given thee a striking proof." Lopez concluded with a prayer to the God of Christians, whose religion I had hitherto refused to embrace, and we parted with sobbings.

Punishment for my ingratitude was not long delayed. Through want of experience, I lost myself in the woods, and was taken by a party of Muscogules and Seminoles, as Lopez had predicted. They soon discovered, by my dress and the feathers on my head, that I belonged to the tribe of Natchez. On account of my youth, they bound me but slightly.

Simaghan, the chief of the party, demanded my name. I replied, "My name is Chactas, son of Outalissi, son of

Miscou, who have taken more than a hundred scalps from the Muscogule heroes." Simaghan answered, "Chactas, son of Outalissi, son of Miscou, rejoice; thou shalt be burned in the great village." I retorted, "That is bravely said!" And I began my death song.

Prisoner as I was, I could not, for a few of the first days, but admire my enemies. The Muscogule, or rather his ally, the Seminole, always appears gay, happy, and contented. His gait is nimble, his countenance open and serene. He talks much, and with volubility; and his voice is harmonious. Even age does not deprive them of this happy simplicity, and like the old birds of the desert, the fathers warble still their ancient songs in the new airs of their posterity.

The women, who accompanied the party, manifested a tender pity for me on account of my youth, and their curiosity appeared amiable. They asked me many questions concerning my mother and the days of my childhood. They wished to know whether I was suspended, in my mossy cradle, to the flowery branches of the maple tree, and whether the gentle breezes rocked me near the nests of the little birds. A thousand other questions followed, concerning the state of my heart. They asked me if ever I had seen a white deer in my dreams, and if the trees of the secret valley had instructed me to love.

I ingenuously answered the mothers and daughters and the wives.[21] "You are," said I, "the ornament of the day; and the night loves you like the dew. Man from his infancy is dependent on you. Your words are a magic which assuages all grief, and mitigates all pain. Hear what she said who brought me into the world, and whom I never expect to see

[21] Read here this expurgated sentence: "Man comes forth from your bosom to cling to your breast and your mouth."

more! She told me that virgins were mysterious flowers, found only in solitary places."

These praises gave great pleasure to the women. They loaded me with presents of various kinds. They brought me oil of nuts, maple sugar, sagamite,[22] smoked bear's meat, beaver skins, shells to ornament my person, and moss for my bed. They sang, they laughed with me, and then fell to weeping when they thought I was soon to be burned.

One night as I was sitting near the fire of the camp, with the warrior who attended me as a guard, I heard the rustling of a garment upon the grass, and a woman, half-veiled, appeared and came and seated herself by my side.

Tears streamed from her eyes, and a little golden crucifix sparkled upon her breast, by the light of the fire. She was regularly beautiful, and in her countenance appeared certain indescribable traits of virtue and affection which carried with them an irresistible charm; to all which was added a most delicate air. An extreme sensibility, united with a deep melancholy, discovered itself in her looks. Her smile was enrapturing.

I thought her to be the *virgin of the last love;*[23] that virgin which is sent to a prisoner of war to enchant his tomb. In this persuasion I said, with much hesitancy (which, however, did not arise through fear of the stake), "Virgin! you are worthy of the *first* love; and you surely cannot be made for the *last* love. The palpitations of a heart which are soon to cease would poorly correspond with the pulsations of yours. Why mingle the dead with the living? You would

[22] "A sort of paste made of Indian corn" (C).

[23] According to Bédier, Charlevoix (Vol. I, p. 211) suggested this episode, though no Indian imagination could have invented such a poetical designation.

make me too much to regret the day. May another be more fortunate than I; and may a long union subsist between the liana and the oak."

The young woman answered, "I am not the virgin of the last love. Art thou a Christian?" I replied that I never had forsaken the genius of my cabin. At these words, the virgin suddenly started, and said, "I am sorry that thou art but a wicked idolater! My mother taught me to be a Christian. My name is Atala, daughter of Simaghan of golden bracelets and chief of the warriors who compose this band. We are now going to Appalachucla, where thou wilt be burned." Upon pronouncing these words, Atala arose and departed.

——Here Chactas was obliged to pause. Recollections of past events pressed upon him; and two streams of tears ran from his closed eyes, down his withered cheeks, like two fountains secreted in the bowels of the earth, which are discovered by their waters filtrating through the rocks.

——O my son! at length he replied, thou seest that Chactas is not very wise, notwithstanding his renowned wisdom. Alas, my dear child, permit those who cannot see, at least to weep! For several successive nights, the sachem's daughter continued to visit me near the fire of the camp. Sleep had fled from my eyes, and Atala occupied all my thoughts.

On the seventeenth day of our march, about the time when the sun hides himself behind the mountains, we entered upon the great savanna of Alachua.[24] It is surrounded by hills which rise in succession one behind the other till they terminate in the clouds, with forests of unequal heights,

[24] A plain in the state of Florida, described as Bédier says, by Bartram. The modern town of the same lies northwest of Gainesville.

such as the palm tree, the citron, the magnolia, and the live oak. The chief gave orders for the powwow of joy,[25] and the army encamped at the foot of the hills. They tied me at some distance, on the brink of one of those natural wells, so famous in the Floridas. I was fastened to a tree and vigilantly guarded by a warrior.

I had been but a few minutes in that place, before the shadow of Atala appeared in the fountain. "Hunter," said she to the Muscogule hero, "if you wish to pursue the deer, I will guard the prisoner." At these words of the chief's daughter, the warrior leaped for joy, and was soon out of sight.

Strange contradiction of the heart of man! I, who had so ardently desired an opportunity to open my soul to her whom I loved as the sun, now, silent and confused, would rather have been thrown to the crocodiles of the fountain than to find myself thus alone with Atala. The guardian of man in the desert was no less disconcerted than her prisoner.

Our mouths were closed in silence; and the genii of love had deprived us of words. At length, the daughter of the renowned Simaghan, after considerable effort, thus spoke: "Warrior, you are but slightly bound, you may easily escape." At these words, strength was restored to my tongue, and I replied, "Slightly bound, O woman!"—I knew not how to proceed.

Atala hesitated for a few moments, and then replied, "Save yourself." She released me from the tree. I seized the cord, and put it into the hands of the stranger, forcing her delicate fingers to grasp my chain. "Take it, take it," I cried. "You are a mad man," said Atala, in a voice much moved.

[25] "Powwow" substituted by Bingham for "arrival signal."

"Unhappy man! what do you mean? Do you know that I am the daughter of a powerful sachem?"

"There was a time," replied I with tears, "when I also was carried in a beaver skin on the back of a mother. My father had also a fine wigwam, and his flocks of deer drank the waters of a thousand rivers; but I am now a wanderer without a country. When I shall be no more, I have not a friend to cover my body with a little grass, to guard it from the flies. The corpse of an unfortunate stranger is interesting to no one."

These words wrought upon the feelings of Atala; and her tears dropped into the fountain. "Ah!" continued I with a degree of vivacity, "if your heart speaks like mine, is not the desert before us? Have not the forests, in their verdant robes, a covering to secrete us? Do children of the cabin need much to make them happy? O maiden, more beautiful than the bridegroom's first dream! O my dearly beloved! dare to follow my steps in solitude." Such were my words. To which Atala most tenderly replied, "My young friend, you have learned the language of the whites; it is easy to deceive an Indian maid."

"What!" cried I; "do you call me your young friend! Ah! rather a poor slave." "Well!" said she, leaning towards me, "a poor slave." I interrupted with ardor—"Let one kiss assure him of thy faith!" Atala heard my prayer; as the fawn seems to kiss the dewy lianas with his delicate tongue as he skips along the ledges of the mountain, so did I embrace the rosy lips of my dearly beloved.[26]

[26] Less freely translated: "As a fawn seems to hang upon the flowers of the pink lianas which he seizes with his delicate tongue from the brow of the mountains, so I remained suspended upon the lips of my dearly beloved."

Alas! my dear son, adversity often treads on the heels of prosperity! Who could have believed, that the moment in which Atala gave me the first token of her love should be the same which she chose to plunge a dagger into my bosom! White hairs of old Chactas! what was your astonishment, when the maid of the desert pronounced these words! "Beautiful prisoner, I have foolishly yielded to thy request; but where will this growing passion lead us? My religion separates me from thee forever—O my mother! what hast thou done!" Atala instantly stopped, and seemed to repress some fatal secret which was ready to escape from her lips.

These words plunged me into the depths of despair. "Well," I cried, "I will be as cruel as you; I will not fly. You shall see me encircled with flames; you shall hear my dying groans, and then you will have pleasure enough."

Atala seized my hands and pressed them between hers. "Poor young idolater," cried she, "you really force me into pity! You then would have me weep till my heart breaks! What affliction shall I not bring upon myself, if I fly with thee! O Atala! why did not thy unhappy mother cast thee to the crocodiles of the fountain!"[27]

At this very moment the crocodiles, at the approach of sun setting, commenced their hideous yellings. Said Atala, "Let us quit this dark abode." I conducted the daughter of Simaghan to the feet of the mountains, which form the green valleys by projecting their promontories into the savannas.

All was calm, sublime, solitary, and melancholy in the

[27] Expurgation. The original reads: "Why can I not flee with you! Unhappy was your mother's womb, O Atala! Why don't you throw yourself to the crocodile in the spring?"

desert. The stork cried upon its nest; the woods echoed the monotonous song of the quail, the prating of the paroquets, the bellowing of the bison, and the neighing of the Seminole horse.

Our walk was almost silent. I kept by the side of Atala, who held the end of the cord which I had forced into her hands. Sometimes we shed tears; sometimes we endeavored to smile; now a look towards heaven, then towards the earth; an ear listening to the song of the bird, a motion towards the setting sun; hands tenderly joined; hearts sometimes throbbing, and sometimes tranquil; the names of Chactas and Atala softly repeated by turns. O first ramble with Atala in the desert! Thy very remembrance must be very powerful, since after so many years of misfortune, thou still overwhelmest the heart of old Chactas!

How incomprehensible is the human heart, agitated by passions! I had resolved to abandon the generous Lopez, and to expose myself to every danger, for the sake of my liberty; in an instant, the love of a woman had changed my taste, my resolution, and my judgment. Forgetting my country, my mother, my wigwam,[28] and the frightful death which awaited me, I had become indifferent to everything which did not relate to Atala.

Without power to exercise the reasoning faculty of man, I had all at once relapsed into childhood; and so far from being able to provide for myself, I had almost need that others should feed me and rock me to sleep.

It was utterly in vain, then, after our walk in the savanna, that Atala threw herself at my feet and besought me again to quit her. I protested to her that I would return alone to

[28] Chateaubriand wrote "hut."

the camp, if she refused to rebind me to the foot of my tree. She was obliged to comply, in hopes of overcoming me at some future time.

The day after that which decided the destiny of my life, our army halted in a valley, not far from Cuscowilla, the capital of the Seminoles. These Indians, united with the Muscogules, form with them the confederation of the Creeks. The daughter of the country of palm trees sought me out in the dead of night. She conducted me into a deep forest of pines, and renewed her entreaties to persuade me to fly. Without answering her, I took her hand in mine and forced this persecuted hind to wander with me through the forest.

The night was serene and pleasant. The genius of the air shook his green locks, embalmed with perfume of the pines; and we breathed the odor of amber which the crocodiles exhaled while lying under the tamarind trees of the rivers. The moon illuminated the azure vault of heaven, unspotted with clouds, and her pearl-colored rays floated among the uneven tops of the forest trees. No noise was heard, except a far distant harmony which reigned in the profound recesses of the wood. It might be said that the soul of solitude breathed throughout the vast extent of the desert.

We perceived through the trees a young man carrying a flambeau in his hand, who resembled the genius of spring, running through the forests to reanimate nature. It was a lover, going, according to custom, to the cabin of his mistress to receive her answer.[29]

If the young woman extinguished the flambeau, she ac-

[29] The author, says Cloran, is indebted to Carver for this episode.

cepted a husband; if she veiled herself and suffered it to burn, then the offered vows were rejected. The warrior as he crept along among the trees, in a low tone of voice sung the following words:

"I will outstrip the day upon the summit of the mountains, to catch my solitary dove on some branch of the forest.

"I will tie around her neck a collar of wampum;[30] on that shall appear three red beads for my love, three purple ones for my fears, and three blue ones for my hopes.

"Mila has the eyes of an ermine, and hair flowing like a field of rice: her mouth is a rose-colored shell, set off with pearls; her whole form is like a stately roe, without the least blemish.[31]

"O may Mila quench this torch! May she blow it out with her precious breath! Then shall she carry in her arms the hope of our country; and I will smoke the calumet of peace over the cradle of my son.

"Ah! let me outstrip the day upon the summit of the mountains, to take my solitary dove upon some branch of the forest."

Thus sung this young man, whose accents pierced my very soul, and caused the countenance of Atala to change. Our united hands trembled one in the other. But our attention was drawn from this scene to another no less dangerous for us. We passed by the tomb of an infant, which served as the boundary between two nations. They had placed it by the side of the way, according to custom, that the young women in going to the fountain might inhale the

[30] The French reads *collier de porcelaines*. "A kind of shells" (C).

[31] Expurgation: "her two breasts are like two spotless kids, born of the same mother on the same day."

soul of the innocent creature and restore it to its native country.

At the same moment we there saw new married women, who, coveting the honorable title of mother, with open lips endeavored to catch the fleeting soul of the infant, which they supposed was hovering upon the flowers. They gave place to the true mother, who carried a sheaf of wheat and a bunch of white lilies and laid them upon the tomb.

Then sitting down on the dewy grass, with melting accents she thus addressed her child: "Why should I weep for thee in thy cradle of earth, O my first born! When the little bird is grown large, it must then seek its own food; and it finds in the forest many bitter seeds, many poison fruits. At least, thou hast shed no tears; at least, thy heart has never been exposed to the destructive wiles of man. The bud which withers on the stalk passes away with all its perfume, like thee, O my son! with all thy innocence. Happy they who die in the cradle! They have known nothing but the smiles and kisses of a mother."

Already subdued by our affection for each other, we were quite overwhelmed with these representations of love and maternal tenderness, which seemed to pursue us in these dark, enchanted solitudes in order to confound us. I carried Atala in my arms into the thickest grove and there told her many things which have entirely escaped my recollection.

The south wind, my dear son, loses its heat in passing over fields of ice; and the remembrance of love in the heart of an old man is like the rays of the planet of day reflected by the peaceful orb of night when the sun is set and silence and melancholy brood over the huts of the savages.

Who could save Atala? What could prevent her from falling a victim to the violence of passion? Undoubtedly

nothing but a miracle; and that miracle was performed. The daughter of Simaghan had recourse to the God of Christians. She prostrated herself upon the earth and pronounced a fervent prayer addressed to her mother and to the queen of virgins.

From that moment, O René! I conceived a wonderful idea of that religion which, in the midst of a wilderness, could supply the wants of two unfortunate wretches, deprived of every necessary of life; that religion which, opposing nothing but its own power to an overflowing torrent of passions, prevented an outrage, the perpetration of which the situation of the place, the absence of men, and the darkness of the night all favored.[32]

Ah, how divine did the simple savage, the ignorant Atala, appear, who on her knees before the trunk of an old pine tree, as at the foot of an altar, offered to her God supplications for an idolatrous lover! Her eyes, raised towards the planet of night, her cheeks, shining with the tears of religion and love, exhibited more than mortal beauty.

Many times it appeared to me that she was about to take her flight to heaven; many times I thought I saw descending upon the rays of the moon, and that I heard among the branches of the trees, the genii which the God of Christians sends to the hermits of the rocks, whenever he is pleased to take them to himself. I was greatly distressed, for I evidently foresaw that Atala had but a short time to spend upon earth.

Nevertheless she shed such an abundance of tears, she

[32] Free translation of a passage reading: "of that religion which, opposing its power against the torrent of the passions, is alone able to conquer the most violent inclinations, even when everything favors them, the loneliness of the woods, the absence of men, and the secrecy of the night."

appeared so wretched, that I should perhaps have consented to make my escape had not the war whoop[33] resounded in the forest, and three armed men seized suddenly upon me. We had been discovered; the chief warrior had given orders to pursue us.

Atala, who resembled a queen in stateliness of gait and nobleness of thought, disdained to speak to the warriors. She cast upon them a reproving look and returned and presented herself before her father. There she could obtain nothing in my favor. They doubled my guard, multiplied my chains, and separated me from my love.

Five nights pass away, and we come in sight of Appalachucla, situated on the banks of the river Chata Uche. They immediately crown me with flowers, paint my face with blue and vermilion, suspend beads from my nose and ears, and put into my hand a chickikoua.[34]

Thus prepared for sacrifice, I enter Appalachucla, among continued shouts of the multitude. I give myself up for lost, when all at once a horn is heard, and the Mico, or chief of the nation, orders the assembling of a council.

You know, my son, the torments which the savages make their prisoners of war undergo. The Christian missionaries, at the peril of their lives, and with indefatigable zeal, had traveled through many nations, and had persuaded them to substitute slavery of a milder kind for the horrors of burning.[35]

The Muscogules had not yet adopted this custom, but a large party had declared in favor of it. It was for the pur-

[33] Chateaubriand wrote "war-cry."

[34] "Musical instrument of the savages" (C); a sort of gourd-rattle.

[35] Mistranslation for "had succeeded among several nations in obtaining the substitution of a mild slavery for the horrors of the stake."

pose of deciding upon this important question that the Mico convoked the sachems. I was conducted to the place of their deliberation.

Not far from Appalachucla, on an isolated mound, stood the pavilion of the council. Three circular rows of columns formed the elegant architecture of this amphitheater. The pillars were of cypress, polished and sculptured. They increased in height and thickness and diminished in number as one approached the center, which was distinguished by a single pillar. From the summit of this pillar proceeded strips of bark, which, passing over the tops of the others, covered the pavilion in the form of a fretwork umbrella.

The council assemble. Fifty old men, richly dressed in beaver skins, range themselves in seats facing the door of the pavilion. The grand chief is seated in the midst of them, holding in his hand the calumet of peace, half painted for war. On the right of the old men are placed fifty women, clothed in a drapery woven with swan feathers. The war chiefs, with tomahawks[36] in their hands, plumes of feathers on their heads, and breasts stained with blood, take the left of the fathers of the country.

At the foot of the central column burns the council fire. The chief priest, surrounded by eight guardians of the temple clothed in long robes and wearing on their heads a stuffed owl skin, pours balsam of fir into the fire and offers a sacrifice to the sun. This triple rank of old men, matrons, and warriors, these priests, these clouds of incense, this sacrifice, all serve to give to this savage council a most extraordinary and pompous appearance.

In the midst of the assembly I stood, bound. The sacri-

[36] Chateaubriand used the word "hatchet."

fice finished, the Mico addresses the council, and, with simplicity, explains to them the cause of their convocation. He then throws among them a blue belt, in testimony of his own sentiments.[37]

Then a sachem of the tribe of the eagle rises, and thus speaks: "Father Mico, Sachems, Matrons, Warriors of the four tribes, the eagle, the beaver, the serpent, and the turtle, let us not change the manners of our ancestors. Let us burn the prisoner, and not effeminate our courage. What is proposed to us is a custom of the whites, and therefore must be pernicious. My words are contained in a red belt. I have done." And he throws a red belt into the assembly.

Next arose a matron, and said: "Father Eagle, you have the cunning of a fox and the slow prudence of a turtle. I wish to brighten between you and me the chain of friendship and that we might plant the tree of peace. But let us change the customs of our ancestors as far as they were pernicious. Let us have slaves to cultivate our fields, and let us no longer hear the cries of prisoners, those tormenting cries which rend the hearts of mothers. I have finished."

As the waves of the sea dash against each other during a storm, as in autumn the dry leaves are raised with a whirlwind, as the reeds of the Meschaceba shake and bend in a sudden inundation, as a large flock of deer bellow in the depths of a forest, so was the agitation and murmuring of the council. Sachems, warriors, matrons, talk in turns, or rather all together. Interests clash, opinions are divided, the council is about to dissolve. But finally ancient usage prevails, and it is determined that I shall be put to death by the accustomed tortures.

[37] Bédier points out that the preceding scenes of Indian life are based on Bartram, Vol. II, pp. 168 ff.

One circumstance tended to retard my execution; the feast of the dead, or the festival of souls, approached. It is a custom never to put a prisoner to death during the days consecrated to this important ceremony. They intrusted me to a watchful guard, and the sachems probably took care to send away the daughter of Simaghan; for I saw her no more.

In the meantime, the nations for more than three hundred leagues around came pouring in, in crowds, to celebrate the festival of souls. A long building was erected in a retired situation. On a set day, each wigwam dug up the remains of their fathers from their particular tombs and suspended all the skeletons on the sides of the walls of the common hall of the ancients.

The winds (for they chose a tempestuous time), the winds, the forests, the cataracts, roared without, while the old men of various nations concluded treaties of commerce, of peace, and alliance, over the bones of their fathers.

They celebrate the funeral games, the race, the ball, and the cockles. Two virgins strive to take from each other a willow stick. The buttons of their bosoms meet, their mouths touch, their hands slide upon the stick, which they raise above their heads. Their beautiful naked feet lock together; they press against each other, and mingle their hair; they look at their mothers, and receive a clap of applause with a blush.[38]

[38] See Frontispiece. Cockles, a game of knuckle-bones. "Blushing is noticeable in the case of the young savages" (C). Some of the details of Indian customs given above are derived from Charlevoix; others, as Chinard indicates, come from Lafitau's *Mœurs des sauvages américains comparées aux mœurs des premiers temps* (1724), Vol. II, which is illustrated. The plate (see Frontispiece) is described thus: "Cérémonies de

The priest invokes Michabou, genius of the waters. He recounts the wars of the great Rabbit against Kichimanatou, the god of evil. He relates the story of the first man, and of the beautiful Atahensic, the first woman, who was precipitated from heaven for having lost her innocence. He speaks of the earth's blushing with fraternal blood; of Jouskeka, the impious, immolating the just Tahouitsaron; of the deluge descending at the voice of the great Spirit; of Massou saved alone, in his bark canoe, and the raven sent away on the discovery of the earth. He further tells of the beautiful Endaë, raised from the land of souls by the enchanting songs of her husband.[39]

After these games and these hymns, they prepare to give to their ancestors an everlasting burial. On the banks of the river Chata Uche, stood a wild fig tree, which the people, by their manner of worship, had consecrated. It was a custom of the virgins to wash their garments made of bark, in this place, and expose them to the winds on the branches of this ancient tree. It was there they dug a spacious tomb.

They proceed from the common hall, chanting the funeral hymn. Each family carries some sacred remains; and even the little children are loaded with great bones of their fathers. This solemn procession arrives at the tomb. There

---

la sepulture chez les Iroquois. Le mort élevé sur le brancard sur lequel il a été porté, est auprès de sa fosse que deux hommes preparent. A côté de lui sont tous les petits meubles qu'on doit mettre dans son Tombeau. Le maître des Cérémonies paraît ensuite tenant dans ses deux mains les bâtons avec lesquels doivent s'exercer les gladiateurs hommes et femmes, qui doivent honorer les obsèques par le spectacle d'un combat, après lequel on donne le prix aux Vainqueurs."

[39] Myths of the Indians derived from Charlevoix and from Carver, who, as Cloran points out, uses the name Kitchimanatou for "Matchimanitou," appearing in later editions of *Atala*.

they deposit the relics, laying them lengthwise and separating them with bear and beaver skins. A mound is raised over the tomb, and they plant upon it the tree of tears and of sleep.

Let us pity poor human nature, my dear son! These same Indians, whose customs are so affecting, these same women, who had expressed for me such a tender concern, now demanded my death with incessant cries; and whole nations delayed their departure, for the sake of having the pleasure of seeing an unfortunate young man suffer excruciating tortures.

In a valley towards the north, at some distance from the capital town, was a thick wood of cypress and fir trees, called the "bloody grove." In going thither, you pass by the ruins of one of those ancient monuments, which once belonged to a people now unknown in the desert. In the middle of this grove was an extensive plain, where the prisoners of war were sacrificed.

Thither they conducted me in triumph, and all prepare themselves for my execution. They fix the stake of Areskoui; the pines, the elms, the ancient cypresses, fall beneath the hatchet. The funeral pile rises; the spectators build amphitheaters with branches and trunks of trees. Each one invents some new punishment; one proposes to tear off my scalp, another to burn my eyes with red hot tomahawks. I begin my death song.

"O Muscogules! I fear no torments; for I am brave, and defy you. I despise you more than I should old women. My father, the famous Outalissi, son of Miscou, drank from the skulls of your most renowned warriors! You shall never force a sigh from my heart."

A warrior, provoked by my song, pierced my arm with

an arrow, to whom I said, "Brother, I thank thee." In spite of the activity of the murderers, the preparations for the sacrifice could not be finished before the setting of the sun. The juggler, being consulted, objected against disturbing the genii of night; my death was therefore postponed till the next day. But through impatience for the joyful spectacle, and to be ready at the rising of the sun, they did not quit the bloody grove, but built large fires, and began their feasting and dancing.

In the meantime, they stretched me upon my back, and tied cords around my neck, my arms, and my legs, which were fastened to stakes driven into the ground. My guards lay upon these cords; and it was impossible to make the least movement without their perceiving it.

The night passes away; the singing and dancing ceases by degrees; the fires emit but a feeble glimmering, before which are still seen the shadows of a few straggling savages. The multitude are buried in sleep. As the noise of men decreases, that of the wilderness augments; and to the uproar of voices succeeds the whistling of the winds among the trees.

At this hour, a young female who had lately become a mother, awaked out of sleep; for she thought she heard the cries of her firstborn, demanding the sweet nourishment which nature provides. With eyes uplifted towards heaven where the moon wandered among the clouds, I ruminated upon my unhappy fate. Atala appeared to me to be a monster of ingratitude. I, who had devoted myself to the flames rather than forsake her!—to abandon me, at the moment of my execution!—And yet I thought I could love her forever; nay, so ardent was my affection, that I thought I could willingly die for her.

Pleasure, in extreme, serves as an incentive to keep us awake by constantly admonishing us to enjoy the precious moment. On the contrary, extreme grief has the strange operation of putting us to sleep. Eyes fatigued with shedding tears naturally incline to close themselves; and Providence thus appears bountiful in our deepest afflictions.

In spite of myself I yielded to that heavy slumber which the miserable are sometimes permitted to enjoy. I dreamed that someone released me from my fetters; and I thought I experienced that relief which one feels after having been loaded with chains and the hand of succor breaks them.

This sensation became so lively that it forced me to raise my eyelids. By the dim light of the moon, from which a ray then escaped between two clouds, I discerned a large white figure leaning over me, in the act of untying the cords with which I was bound. I was about to cry out when a hand, which I instantly knew, stopped my mouth.

One single cord remained; but it seemed impossible to break it without disturbing a warrior who covered it entirely with his body. Atala takes gentle hold of it; the warrior partly awakes, and half raises himself up. Atala stands immovable, and stares him in the face. The Indian, taking her for the Spirit of the ruins, lies down again, shuts his eyes, and invokes his god. The cord is broken.

I rise, and follow my deliverer. But what a multitude of dangers surround us! Sometimes we are on the point of stumbling over savages who lie sleeping in the dark; sometimes we are hailed by a sentinel, whom Atala answers in a counterfeit voice. Children are heard crying on all sides; bulldogs beset our passage with frightful barking. We are scarcely without the territory consecrated to death before tremendous howlings rend the forest. The camp is awak-

ened; fires are lighted; on every side savages are seen running with live torches in their hands. We precipitate our flight.

By the time Aurora appeared in the east, we were far in the desert. Great Spirit! thou knowest what was my transport when I found myself once more in solitude with Atala; with Atala, my deliverer; with Atala, who gave herself to me forever. Words failed upon my tongue; I fell upon my knees, and addressed the daughter of Simaghan in the following manner: "Men are very insignificant beings at all times, but when visited by the genii, they are nothing. You are one of the genii; you have visited me, and I am unable to speak before you."

Atala tendered me her hand with a melancholy smile. "How was it possible," said she, "that I should not fly with you, when you would not depart without me? This night, I bribed the priest with presents; I made your tormentors drunk with the essence of fire;[40] and it was my duty to hazard my life for you, since you had given yours for me. Yes, young idolater," added she, with an accent which frightened me, "the sacrifice shall be reciprocal."

Atala delivered me the arms she had brought away, and then she dressed my wound. In wiping it with a leaf of the papaya,[41] she bathed it with her tears. "This is a balsam," said I, "which you pour into my wound." "I fear," replied she, "that it will prove a poison." It came from the heart. She tore one of her veils from her bosom, with which she made a compress, which she fastened with a buckle of her hair.

Drunkenness, which lasts a long time among the sav-

[40] "Brandy" (C); "rum" (Translator).

[41] Bingham mistranslated his text and wrote "palm tree."

ages, and is a kind of disease in their constitutions, undoubtedly prevented their pursuing us for several days; and if afterwards they made any search, it is probable it was towards the west, in the persuasion that we should descend the Meschaceba. But we had steered our course towards the immovable star, being directed by the moss which grows on the trunks of the oaks.[42]

We too soon learned that we had gained but little by my escape; the desert now opened to our view its immeasurable solitudes. Without experience in procuring sustenance in these desert wilds, wandering in an unknown track, without any guide, what could become of us in this howling wilderness! Often when I looked upon Atala, I called to mind that ancient story of Hagar[43] which Lopez had taught me to read and which happened, long since, in the wilderness of Beersheba, when men lived three ages of the oaks.

As I was almost naked, Atala made me a cloak of the inner bark of the ash. She embroidered my moccasins,[44] made of muskrat skins, with porcupine quills. In my turn, I attended to her apparel. Sometimes I put upon her head a garland of blue mallows which we found in our route, in the burying-grounds which the Indians had deserted. Sometimes I made necklaces of the red seeds of the azedarah[45] or bead tree; and then I contemplated this marvelous beauty with a smile of complacency.

When we met with a river, we passed it either upon a

[42] Immovable star, "The north" (C). "It is observable that this moss grows chiefly on the north side of the tree" (Translator).

[43] See the book of Genesis, xxi : 14–21.

[44] "Indian shoes" (C).

[45] Not the azedarac (bead-tree or Pride of India), but the "azalea," in Chateaubriand's text.

raft or by swimming. In the latter case, Atala rested one of her hands upon my shoulder and like two traveling swans we crossed these solitary streams.

During the heat of the day, we often took shelter under the moss of the cedars. Almost all the trees in Florida, particularly the cedar and the live oak, are covered with a white moss, which extends from the limbs to the ground. If, in the night, by the light of the moon, you should happen to see on the naked plain a solitary holm clothed in this drapery, you would think it a specter, trailing after it its long robes.

The scene is no less picturesque in the day time; for a cloud of butterflies, shining insects, humming-birds, green paroquets, blue jays, etc., light upon this moss and give it the appearance of white linen hangings on which the European artist had painted to the life the figures of various birds and insects.

It was in these wonderful hostels, prepared by the great Spirit in the midst of the wilderness, that we sheltered ourselves from the noontide rays. When the winds arose and shook this stately tree, when the aërial castle built upon its branches began to float in the air, with the birds and the travelers asleep in its apartments, when a thousand sighs proceeded from the corridors and chambers of the movable edifice, the seven wonders of the ancient world never equaled this monument of the desert.

Every night we kindled a great fire and built the traveler's hut by driving four stakes into the ground and covering them with bark. If I had killed a wild turkey, a wood pigeon, or a pheasant, we suspended it before the burning oak on the end of a stick fastened in the ground and left to the wind the operation of turning the hunter's prey. We

ate a kind of moss called rock tripe, the sweet bark of the birch tree, and May apples, which have the taste both of the peach and the raspberry. The black walnut, the sumach, and the maple furnished wine for our solitary table.

Sometimes I went among the reeds in search of a plant whose flower, in shape of a little horn, contained a glass of the purest dew. We returned thanks to Providence, who, upon a slender flower stalk, had placed this limpid source in the midst of stagnant marshes; in the same manner as he has planted hopes in hearts rent with grief and disappointment, as he has caused virtue to flow from the very fountains of misery.

Alas! I soon discovered that I had been deceived with respect to the serenity apparent in the countenance of Atala. In proportion as we advanced in the desert, her melancholy increased. She often started and looked around her without any visible cause.

I sometimes surprised her casting at me the most affectionate look, which she suddenly withdrew and in sadness bestowed on some other object. What frightened me most was that her eyes evidently betrayed some hidden mystery, some important secret, which she smothered in her breast. Always receiving and rejecting my caresses, animating and depressing my hopes, when I thought I had made some little impression upon her heart, a short time convinced me how much I had been deceived.

How many times did she say to me, "O my young friend! I love thee as I love the shade of the trees in the heat of the day! Thou art beautiful as the desert with all its flowers, and all its breezes. If I lean against thee, I heave a sigh; if my hand accidentally fall upon thine, it seems as if I was going to die. The other day, as thou wert inclining

towards me, the winds moved thy hair across my face and I thought I felt the light touch of invisible spirits.

"Yes, I have seen the roes of mount Occonee;[46] I have heard the discourses of the most enlightened sages; but the sweetness of little fawns and the wisdom of old men are less pleasing and less powerful than thy words. Well, poor Chactas, I never shall be thy wife!"

The perpetual contradictions of love and religion in Atala; the excess of her tenderness, and the chastity of her manners; the haughtiness of her character, and her deep sensibility; the elevation of her mind in great affairs, her susceptibility in small ones; all tended to represent her to me as an incomprehensible being. Atala was not calculated to maintain a partial control over a man. Full of passions, she was full of power; he must either adore her, or hate her.

After fifteen days of our forced journey, we came to the chain of the Alleghany Mountains, and reached one of the branches of the Tennessee, a river which empties into the Ohio. Guided by the counsels of Atala, I built a canoe with bark, which I sewed together with the roots of the fir tree and plastered over with gum of the plum tree. In this we embarked, and suffered ourselves to be carried away by the current of the river.

The village of Stico, with its pyramidal tombs and decayed huts, appeared on our left, around the point of a promontory. On the right, we passed the valley of Keow, terminated by a prospect of the cabins of Jore, arranged along on the side of the mountain of the same name.[47] The

[46] There is an Oconee River and an Oconee County in the northern part of the state of Georgia.

[47] Bédier refers the reader to Bartram: ". . . . on the towering hills appeared the ruins of the ancient famous town of Sticoë. Here was a

river which wafted us ran between high banks, over the top of which the sun was seen setting.

These profound solitudes were not troubled with the presence of man. We saw but one Indian hunter, who, standing immovable on the point of a rock, and leaning on his bow, appeared like a statue erected on the mountain to the genius of these deserts.

Atala and I joined our silence to this scene of the primitive world; when, all at once, the child of exile made the air resound with a voice full of emotion and melancholy. She sung her absent country, in the following strains:

"Happy they who have never seen the smoke of the stranger's fire, and who have never been guests at any festivals but those of their fathers.

"If the blue jay of the Meschaceba should say to the nonpareil[48] of Florida, 'Why do you mourn so bitterly? Have you not here pleasant waters and delightful shades, and all kinds of food, as well as in your own forests?' 'Yes,' the fugitive nonpareil would answer; 'but my nest is in the jessamine; who will bring that to me? and have you the sun of my savanna?"

"Happy they who have never seen the smoke of the stranger's fire, and who have never been guests at any festivals but those of their fathers.

"After hours of painful journeying, the traveler sits down sorrowful. He contemplates around him the tops of men's cottages; the traveler has no place where he can rest his

---

vast Indian mount or tumulus. . . ." Elsewhere, he refers to "the enchanting Vale of Keowe." Bartram ascended the Jore Mountains.

[48] "Nonpareil," in the *New English Dictionary*, 5*a*: "A small, beautifully colored finch of the southern United States."

head! He raps, and enters the hut, puts his bow behind the door, and craves hospitality; the master makes a motion with his hand; the traveler takes his bow again, and returns to the desert.

"Happy they who have never seen the smoke of the stranger's fire, and who have never been guests at any festivals but those of their fathers.

"Marvelous stories, related around the fireside, tender effusions of the heart, long habits of loving, so necessary in life, you have filled up the days of those who have never traveled out of their own country! Their tombs are in their native soil, with the setting sun, the tears of their friends, and the charms of religion.

"Happy they who have never seen the smoke of the stranger's fire, and who have never been guests at any festivals but those of their fathers."

Thus sung Atala; nothing interrupted her complaints, except the gentle rippling caused by our canoe upon the waters. In two or three places only, they were collected by a feeble echo, which repeated them to a second, in accents more feeble, and that one to a third, in notes more feeble still. One would have thought that the souls of two lovers, once unfortunate like ourselves, attracted by these melting strains, were diverting themselves by sighing out the last notes in the mountain.

In the meantime, solitude, the continual presence of the beloved object, and our misfortunes themselves every moment increased our love. The powers of Atala began to abate; and the passions with which she was continually at war began to triumph in some degree over her Christian virtues. She prayed often to her mother, whose incensed shade she seemed to have a desire to appease. Sometimes

she asked me if I heard a mournful voice and whether I saw flames arise out of the earth.

As for me, worn out with fatigue, and foreboding that I should never return, but die in the wilderness,[49] I oftentimes proposed to her that we should build a little hut in the thickest of the forest, and there spend the remainder of our days together.

But she always resisted the proposition. "Consider," said she, "my young friend, that a warrior should be devoted to his country. What is a feeble woman, in comparison with the duties you have to fulfill? Take courage, son of Outalissi, and murmur not against thy destiny.

"The heart of man is like the sponge of the river, which at one time, during a calm, imbibes pure water; at another time, when tempests have troubled the stream, it is swelled with the impure tide. Has the sponge a right to say, I thought that there never would be any storms, that the sun never would become scorching?"

——O René, if you fear the disorders of the heart, enter not into savage retreats. The great passions are solitary; and to transport them into the desert is but to give them their empire.

Burdened with cares and apprehensions, exposed to fall into the hands of the enemy, to be swallowed up in the waters, to be stung by serpents, or devoured by wild beasts; procuring with difficulty a pitiful subsistence, and knowing not which way to direct our steps, our misfortunes seemed incapable of further augmentation, when an accident happened which heaped up the measure of our woes.

[49] Expurgation. Insert, after comma: "I was oftentimes ready to seize my spouse in my arms."

It was the twenty-seventh sun since our departure from the cabins; the fire moon[50] had commenced its course, and everything announced a storm. Towards the time when the Indian matrons hang the laboring staff upon the branches of the savin[51] and when the paroquets retire into the hollow cypresses to enjoy the cool air in the heat of the day, the sky began to be overcast. All the voices of the solitude ceased; the desert was hushed; the mute forests rested in a universal calm.

Presently, the rolling of far distant thunder, extending into these woods, as old as the world, forced from them sounds which were truly sublime. Fearing that we should be buried in the deep, we strove to gain the shore and to seek shelter in a thicket.

The place where we landed was a marshy piece of ground. We proceeded with difficulty, under an arch of smilax and among entangling grape vines, indigo plants, wild beans, and creeping lianas, which fettered our feet like nets. The humid ground made a rumbling noise all around us, and every moment we were in danger of being swallowed up in quagmire. Insects without number, and enormous bats, blinded us; rattlesnakes hissed on every side; and wolves, bears, carcajous, small tigers,[52] which lurked in these retreats, filled them with their roarings.

[50] "Month of July" (C).

[51] Laboring staff—primitive long-handled plough. Savin, from Fr. *savinier*, juniper tree.

[52] "Carcajou" in the *New English Dictionary*: "from French of North America, apparently of Indian origin, wolverene." Tigers, wildcats. Bartram, quoted by Cloran, says: "This creature is called in Pennsylvania and the Northern States panther; but in Carolina and the Southern States, is called tyger; it is very strong, much larger than any dog, of a yellowish brown or clay color, having a long tail."

In the meantime, the darkness increases: the tops of the trees are enveloped in thick mists. Suddenly the black cloud bursts, and streams of lightning fill the waste with fire. An impetuous wind breaks from its prison, mingling clouds with clouds, and forming one vast chaos. The sky opens to view at every clap, and through the crevices of the clouds are seen new heavens and burning fields of ether. The whole mass of the forest bends. What a frightful and magnificent spectacle! The lightning sets fire to the woods in divers places; the devouring element spreads, and rises in volumes of flame. Columns of fire and smoke besiege the clouds, which disgorge torrents of sulphur upon the vast conflagration.

The roaring of the storm and of the fire, the noise of the winds, the groaning of the trees, the cries of imaginary beings, the howling of beasts, the dashing of the floods, the hissing of thunderbolts in the quenching waters; all these noises, multiplied by the echoes of the sky and the mountains, were enough to deafen the whole desert.

The great Spirit knows that at this moment, I saw nothing but Atala; I thought of nothing but her! At the foot of a birch tree, under which we had retreated, I made a shelter for her with my body; and in defending her from the storm, I frequently received a shower of rain, which poured upon us from the leaves of the trees. Seated in the water against the trunk of the tree, and holding my dearly beloved on my knees, notwithstanding our distressed situation, I could not but enjoy exquisite delight.[53]

[53] Free paraphrase of these lines: "holding my dearly beloved on my knees, warming her bare feet in my hands, I was happier than the bride who for the first time feels her fruit thrill in her side."

While we were listening to the noise of the tempest, I thought I felt a tear upon my hand from Atala's eye. "O cloud," cried I, "is this a drop of thy rain!" Then gently embracing her, "Atala," said I, "you secrete something from me. Open to me thy heart, O my delight! It gives great satisfaction to make known our griefs to a friend. Disclose to thy lover that other secret, which thou dost so obstinately withhold. Ah! I discern it; thou bewailest thy country!"

She directly replied, "Child of men, how should I weep for my country, when my father was not of the land of palm trees?" "How!" replied I, struck with astonishment; "your father not of the country of palm trees! Who then brought you into this land of tears? Answer me." Atala replied as follows:

"Before my mother had carried as a marriage portion to the warrior Simaghan thirty mares, twenty buffaloes, a hundred measures of the oil of nuts, fifty beaver skins, and many other treasures, she had been acquainted with a man of white flesh. Now the mother of my mother threw water into her face,[54] and forced her to marry the magnanimous Simaghan, who had all the appearance of a king and was honored by the people as a genius.

"But my mother said to her new husband, 'Kill me, for I am not worthy to be thy wife;[55] and become not a father to what is not thine own offspring.' Simaghan replied, 'The great Spirit preserve me from such a base action! I will not mutilate thee, I will not cut off thy nose nor thy ears, because thou hast been sincere, and hast not been unfaithful to my

[54] According to Charlevoix, the greatest punishment to children (Cloran).

[55] Expurgation. Read: "Kill me, for my womb has conceived."

couch. Thy offspring shall be my offspring; and I will not visit thee till after the departure of the water fowl, when the thirteenth moon shall begin to shine.

"In the meantime I was born, and began to grow, in disposition resembling both the Spaniard and the savage. My mother made me a Christian, like herself and my father. After that, she became a prey to grief and disappointment, and soon descended to the little cave, garnished with skins, from whence no one ever returns."

Such was the history of Atala. "And who then was thy father, poor orphan of the desert?" said I. "What did men call him upon earth, and what name did he bear among the genii?" "I never washed the feet of my father," said Atala. "I only know that he lived with a sister at St. Augustine, and that he was always faithful to my mother. Philip was his name among the angels, and men called him Lopez."

At these words, I set up a cry which resounded through the woods. The sound of my transports mingled with the noise of the tempest. Pressing Atala to my heart, I cried, with interrupting sobs, "O my sister! O daughter of Lopez! daughter of my benefactor!" Atala, affrighted, demanded the cause of my distress; and when she learned that Lopez was that generous man who had adopted me at St. Augustine, and whom I had forsaken in order to be free, she was herself overcome with joy and confusion.

This fraternal friendship, so unexpected, added to our love, was too much for our hearts.[56] With eyes uplifted towards heaven, and holding my beloved in my arms, in the

[56] Here Bingham omits two sentences: "Atala's struggles were to be in vain! I felt her press her hand to her bosom and make an extreme effort; I had already seized her, I was already enraptured with her breath, I had drunk all the magic of love on her lips."

midst of the desert and in presence of the great Spirit,[57] I called the proud forests, the lianas, the blazing pines, the overflowing river, the groaning mountains, and the very heavens themselves to witness the solemn vows which I made, never to prove unfaithful to her whom my soul loved.

At the moment when I was sealing my vows with a gentle kiss, to which Atala at this time made but a feeble resistance, a rapid stream of lightning, followed by a tremendous clap of thunder, filled all the forest with sulphur and light, and shivered a tree at our feet. We fled, trembling with fright. But oh, wonderful!—in the calm which succeeded this shock, we heard the sound of a bell!

We both stood speechless and listened to this noise, so extraordinary in such a wilderness. Presently a dog was heard to bark at a great distance! As he approached, he redoubled his cries; and when he came up to us, he howled joyfully around our feet. An old hermit, carrying a small lantern, followed him through the woods.

"Blessed be a kind Providence," cried he as soon as he saw us; "I have been a long time seeking you! We commonly ring the missionary bell during the night, and in tempests; and, after the example of our brethren of the Alps and Lebanon, we have taught our dog to find strangers who are lost in these solitudes. He has scented you ever since the

[57] The exact sense of this paragraph is as follows: "In the presence of the Eternal, I held my bride in my arms. Nuptial pomps worthy of our misfortunes and the greatness of our love, wild forests that tossed your vines and your domes like the curtains and canopy of our couch, flaming pines which formed our hymeneal torches, flooded stream, roaring mountains, horrid and sublime nature, were ye but a vain show prepared but to cheat us, and could ye not hide for a moment in your mysterious horrors the happiness of a man?"

commencement of the storm, and he has conducted me here. Oh, surprising! how young they are! Poor children, how much they must have suffered in this desert! Come, I have brought a bear skin, which I will put upon this young woman; and here is a little wine in our calabash. May God be praised in all His works! His mercy is very great, and His goodness is infinite."

Atala was already at the feet of the monk. "Director of prayer," said she, "I am a Christian. Heaven sends thee here to save me." As for me, I could hardly believe what I heard and saw. This charity seemed to me so far beyond the attainments of man that I thought it must be all a dream. By the light of the little lantern which the hermit held in his hand I had a glimpse of his beard and his hair, drenched in water. His feet, his hands, and his face were torn with briars and stained with gore.

"Old man," cried I, at last, "what heart dost thou possess, who art not afraid of being struck with thunder?" "Afraid!" replied the father, with some degree of warmth; "afraid, where there are people in danger, and I can afford them relief! I should in that case be a very unworthy servant of Jesus Christ!"

"But dost thou know," said I, "that I am not a Christian!" "Young man," answered the hermit, "have I asked thee of thy religion? Has Jesus Christ said, my blood shall wash this one, and not that? He died for the Jew and for the Gentile; and he looked upon all men as brethren, and as dependent beings. What I do for you here, is but of small moment: you would find elsewhere much greater succours; but the praise ought not to redound to the priests. What are we, feeble, solitary men, but humble instruments of a heavenly work! And yet why should the soldier be so ready to

halt, when his commander-in-chief, with the cross in his hand, and the crown of thorns on his head, marches before him to the relief to mankind?"

These words sunk deep into my heart, and tears of admiration and tenderness flowed from my eyes. "My dear converts," said the missionary, "I govern in these forests a little flock of your savage brethren. My grotto is not far from hence, in the mountain. Come and warm yourselves in my cabin. You will not find in it the conveniences of life, but you will have there a shelter; and even for that we ought to thank divine Providence, for there are many who are denied such a blessing."

THE HUSBANDMAN

There are just men whose consciences are so tranquil that one cannot approach them without participating in the peace which they exhale, if I may so speak, from their hearts and thoughts. By degrees as the anchoret spoke, I perceived the passions subside in my breast; and the tempestuous elements seemed to grow calm at his voice. The clouds were soon so far dispersed as to permit us to quit our retreat.

We left the forest and began to climb up the steeps of a high mountain. The dog went before us; and in carrying the lantern on the end of a stick, it went out.[58] I gave Atala my hand, and we followed the missionary. He often turned round and looked at us, contemplating our misfortunes and our youth. A book was suspended from his neck, and he carried in his right hand a white staff.

[58] Chateaubriand wrote: "The dog went on before us, carrying the extinguished lantern on the end of a stick," a feat which Bingham did not accept.

As to his person, he was tall and thin, his countenance open and sincere. He had not the inanimate, unmeaning features of a man born without passion. It was observable that he had seen trouble in his day; and the wrinkles in his forehead were proofs of passions overcome by virtue and by cherishing in his heart the love of God and man.

When he spoke to us, standing, his eyes, modestly downcast, his aquiline nose, and his long beard, had something sublime in their appearance; and by their direction towards the earth, seemed to aspire after the tomb. Whoever has seen, as I have, Father Aubry walking alone in the woods, with his staff and his breviary, has a perfect idea of a Christian pilgrim on earth.

After a half-hour's dangerous travel in a by-path over the mountain, we arrived at the missionary's grotto. We entered it by passing over humid ivy and squashes which the storm had beaten from the rocks. There was nothing in the place but a mat of the leaves of papaya, a calabash for bringing water, a few wooden vessels, a spade, a tame serpent, and, upon a stone which served for a table, a crucifix and the book of Christians.

The man of ancient days hastened to kindle a fire of dry lianas. He then ground some corn between two stones, and having made of it a cake he baked it in the embers. When this cake had received from the fire a beautiful golden color, he served us with it, all hot, with the oil of butternuts,[59] in a maple dish.

The evening becoming serene, the servant of the Great Spirit proposed to us to go and sit upon part of a rock at the

[59] Chateaubriand's term, *crême de noix*, is derived, as Chinard shows, from Bartram's "hiccory milk."

entrance of the grotto. We followed him to this place, which commanded an extensive view of the desert. The remains of the storm were driven in confusion into the east, and the fires kindled in the woods by the lightning still shone at a distance. At the foot of the mountain, a pine grove was wholly torn up by the roots and the place converted into a muddy pool; and the rivers rolled, in a mixed mass, tempered clay, trunks of trees, bodies of animals, and dead fishes whose silver bellies were seen floating upon the surface of the waves.

It was in the midst of this impressive scene that Atala related our history to the old genius of the mountain. His Christian heart seemed touched, and tears fell upon his beard. "My child," said he to Atala, "you must spread your case before God, for whose glory you have already suffered so much.[60] He will restore tranquillity to your mind. See these forests smoke, these torrents dry up, these clouds dissipate. Do you believe that He who can calm one such a tempest cannot appease the troubles of the heart of man?

"If you have not a better retreat, my dear daughter, I offer you a cabin among the flock which I have had the happiness of conducting to Jesus Christ. I will instruct Chactas, and will give him to you for a husband when he shall be worthy of you."

At these words I fell at the feet of the hermit and shed tears of joy; but Atala grew pale as death. The old man raised me with benignity, and I then perceived that his hands

[60] Bingham, who did not believe in the dogma of vicarious suffering, has here been unfaithful to Chateaubriand who wrote: "My daughter . . . . you must offer your sufferings to God, for whose glory you have done so much already."

were mutilated. Atala comprehended at once the cause of this misfortune. "The barbarians!" cried she.

"My daughter," replied the father, with a pleasant smile, "what is that in comparison with what my divine Master endured? If the idolatrous Indians have afflicted me, they are but poor blind creatures whom God will enlighten at a future day. I cherish them even more on account of the ills they have caused me.

"I could not remain in my own country whither I returned and where an illustrious queen did me the honor to examine these feeble badges of my apostleship. And what more glorious recompense of my labors could I receive than to have obtained from the head of our church permission to celebrate the divine sacrifice with these mangled hands?

"Nothing further remained for me, after such an honor, but to endeavor to render myself worthy of it; and I returned again to these deserts to spend the remainder of my days in the service of my God. It is almost thirty years since I became an inhabitant of this solitude; and it will be twenty-two years tomorrow since I established myself in this rock.

"When I first arrived in this place, I found none but wandering families, whose manners were ferocious and their lives miserable. I made them understand the word of peace, and their manners gradually softened. They now live collected, in a little Christian society, at the foot of this mountain. I have tried, in directing them in the way of salvation, to instruct them in the first arts of life without carrying them too far but retaining these honest people in that simplicity which promotes happiness.

"For myself, fearing that my presence would be too great a restraint upon them, I retired into this grotto, where they come to consult me. It is here that, removed from the sight

of man, I admire and adore God, in the grandeur of these solitudes, and prepare myself for death, which old age so evidently announces to be near at hand."

In finishing these words, the missionary fell upon his knees, and we imitated his example. He began a prayer aloud, to which Atala responded. Lightning, without noise, still illuminated the heavens in the east; and upon the clouds in the west three suns shone at once.

Several foxes, dispersed by the storm, were seen reaching their black noses over the edge of precipices; and various plants on every side, beaten down with the tempest and drying again with the evening breeze, made a continual rustling noise in raising their heads anew.

We re-entered the grotto, where the hermit made a bed for Atala of the moss of the cypress tree. A deep languor discovered itself in the eyes and in the movements of this virgin. She watched Father Aubry, as if she wished to communicate a secret to him; but something seemed to prevent her—either my presence, a degree of bashfulness, or the inutility of the confession.

I heard her get up at dead of night; she sought the missionary, but, as he had given her his bed, he had gone to contemplate the beauty of the night and make his prayer to God on the summit of the mountain. He told me the next day that this was his custom, even in winter; admiring to see the forests wave their naked tops, the clouds skim along the sky, and to hear the hoarse sounds of the winds and the torrents in the desert. My sister was then obliged to return to her couch, where she fell asleep. Alas! elated with hopes, I saw nothing in Atala's indisposition but the ordinary symptoms of fatigue.

The next morning, I was awaked by the songs of the

cardinals and mocking birds nested in the acacias and laurels which surrounded the grotto. I went and plucked a blossom from the magnolia, and deposited it, all bedewed with tears of the morning, upon Atala's head as she lay sleeping. I hoped, according to the religion of my country, that the soul of some child dying in infancy would descend upon this flower in a dewdrop, and that a pleasant dream would convey it to the bosom of my beloved.

After that, I sought my host. I found him with his robe taken up in his two pockets, his chaplet in his hand, waiting for me, seated upon the trunk of a pine tree fallen down with old age. He proposed to me to go with him to the mission, while Atala still took her rest. I accepted his offer, and we set out immediately.

In descending the mountain I observed trees upon which it seemed as if the genii had delineated mysterious figures. The hermit himself had drawn these characters. They were verses of an ancient poet, called Homer, and a few verses of a much more ancient poet still, named Solomon. There was a certain antique and mysterious harmony connected with this wisdom of ages; these verses overgrown with moss, the hermit who engraved them, and these old oaks, which in the heart of the desert served him as books.

His name, his age, the date of his mission were also marked upon a reed of the savanna at the foot of these trees. I was astonished at the fragility of this last monument. "It will endure longer than I shall," replied the father, "and will always have more strength than the little good I have done."

From thence we arrived at a narrow strait of a valley, where I beheld a marvelous work. It was a natural bridge, like that in Virginia, of which you have probably heard. Men, my son, especially those of your country, often imitate

nature, but their copies are always upon a small scale. It is not so with nature when she is pleased to imitate the works of men. It is then that she throws bridges from the summit of one mountain to another, suspends roads among the clouds, opens rivers for canals, and for basins digs out seas.

We passed under a spacious arch of this bridge and found in the center another wonder, for we proceeded from enchantment to enchantment. This was the burying-place of the Indians, or the groves of death. The hermit had permitted them to bury their dead in their own manner, distinguishing this place only by a cross.[61] The ground was divided like the common cornfields, into as many lots as there were families. Each lot made by itself a little grove, which varied according to the taste and disposition of those who planted it. A silent stream ran in a winding course through these groves, called "the rivulet of peace." This smiling asylum of souls was inclosed on the east by the bridge under which we had passed; two hills bounded it on the north and south; and it opened only to the west, where arose to view a stately cluster of fir trees.

The trunks of these red trees, marbled with green and resembling lofty columns, formed a magnificent peristyle to this beautiful temple of death. In this wood was continually heard a solemn murmuring, like the grum[62] sound of an organ, under the arches of a Christian church. But when

[61] "It is probable that Father Aubry had followed the example of the Jesuits in China, who permitted the Chinese to bury their parents in their gardens, according to their ancient custom" (C).

[62] This dialectical and obsolete word is thus defined by the *New English Dictionary:* "of the voice: gruff, harsh, and deep in tone." Its use survived in the United States until the middle of the nineteenth century.

one penetrated into the center of this sanctuary, he there heard nothing but hymns of the feathered tribe, which celebrated an everlasting festival to the memory of the dead.

Immediately on leaving this wood we discovered the village of the mission, situated on the borders of a lake in the center of a savanna covered with flowers. We approached it by an avenue of magnolias and live oaks, which lined one of those ancient paths which are found in the desert.

As soon as the Indians perceived their aged pastor on the plain, they forsook their work and ran to meet him. Some respectfully kissed his robe; others guided his trembling steps. The mothers lifted up their little children in their arms to enable them to see the servant of Jesus Christ, who himself shed tears of paternal affection. He made himself acquainted, as he walked along, with what was going on in the village; and gave counsel to one, and gently reprimanded another. He spoke of the harvest to be gathered in, of children to be instructed, of afflictions to be consoled; and God was in all his discourse.

Thus escorted, we arrived at the foot of a large cross, which stood on the side of the way. It was there that the servant of God had been accustomed to celebrate the mysteries of his religion. "My dear converts," said he, turning towards the crowd, "you have a brother and a sister come to visit you; and to increase your happiness still further I see that divine Providence yesterday spared your harvests. You have then two great reasons for rendering Him thanks. Let us therefore offer to Him divine sacrifice; and let each one come forward with a profound reverence, a lively faith, with infinite gratitude, and a penitent heart."

Forthwith the reverend priest puts on a white robe, made of bark of the mulberry tree, which he had brought with

him; the sacred vessels are taken from a tabernacle at the foot of the cross; the altar is built upon the corner of a rock; the water is drawn from a neighboring stream, and wild grapes furnish the wine for the sacrifice. We all fall upon our knees in the high grass, and the solemnity begins in the midst of the desert.

Aurora, appearing from behind the mountains, illuminated the expansive orient. All things in the forest blushed like the rose. The planet, announced with so much splendor, at length appeared, emerging from an abyss of light; and his first ray met the consecrated host, which the priest at that very moment raised in the air.

O charm of religion! O magnificence of Christian worship! For a priest, an old hermit; for an altar, a rock; for a church, the desert; for assistants, innocent savages! No, I do not doubt but at the moment when we fell with our faces to the ground the great mystery was accomplished, and that the spirit of God descended upon all the forests; for I felt it descend into my heart.[63]

After the sacrifice, where nothing was wanting but the presence of the daughter of Lopez, we repaired to the village, where I admired anew the wonderful effects of thy religion. There was exhibited a striking picture of social and savage life most happily combined. At the corner of a cypress grove of the ancient desert we observed new marks of cultivation. The ears of corn rolled their golden waves over the trunks of the fallen oaks, and the sheaf of one summer's growth replaced the tree of ten ages.

On every side the forests, devoted to flames, filled the air

[63] Chateaubriand, a believer in transubstantiation, wrote: the great mystery was accomplished, God descended upon all the forests, for I felt Him descend within my heart.

with thick smoke, and the plough moved slowly on among the broken fragments of their roots. Surveyors with long chains measured the land, and arbitrators established the first rights. The bird gave up its nest, and the den of the ferocious beast was changed into a cabin. Forges were heard to grumble, and the stroke of the ax, for the last time, made the echoes groan; which were themselves about to expire with the trees which served them as an asylum.

I rambled with delight over a part of these landscapes, rendered still more pleasing by the remembrance of Atala and by the dreams of felicity with which my foolish heart suffered itself to be beguiled. I admired the triumph of Christianity over the savage life; I saw man becoming civilized at the voice of religion. I assisted at the first nuptials of man and the earth: man, by this important contract, devoting himself to the earth, the heritage of his sweat; and the earth, in return, engaging faithfully to cherish the crops, the children, and the ashes of men.

In the meantime they brought an infant to the missionary, who baptized it among the jessamines in bloom on the brink of a fountain; while a coffin passed through the midst of sports and of labors to the groves of death. A youthful pair received the marriage benediction under an oak, and we then went to establish them in a corner of the solitude. The pastor walked before us, blessing here and there both the rocks and the trees and the fountains, as in times of old, according to the book of Christians: "God blessed the uncultivated earth, giving it as an heritage to Adam."

This little procession, made up of such a mixed multitude, following from rock to rock its venerable chief, represented to my feeling heart those ancient migrations of the first families of men, when Shem with his children tra-

versed over the desert world, following the sun, who traveled before him.[64]

I was desirous of learning from the pious hermit how he governed his children; he answered me with obliging condescension. "I have never bound them by any law; I have only taught them to love one another, to pray to God, and to hope for a better life. In this are comprehended all the laws in the world. You see in the center of the village a cabin larger than any of the others. This serves for a chapel during the rainy season. There they assemble, morning and evening, to praise the Lord, and when I am absent an old man leads the exercise; for old age, like maternity, is a kind of natural priesthood.

"After the morning service, they go to their labor in the fields; and although the property is divided, for the purpose of teaching social economy, yet the harvests are deposited in common granaries, in order to promote brotherly love. Four old men equally distribute the product of the fields. If you add to these things a few religious ceremonies and many hymns; the cross where I administered the sacrament; the elm under which I preach in pleasant weather; our tombs, bordering on our corn fields; our streams, where I plunge the little children—you will have a perfect idea of this little kingdom of Jesus Christ."

The words of this shepherd animated my soul; and I was at once convinced of the superiority of this settled, moral, and industrious way of living over the roving, useless, and idle life of the savage.

——Ah! René, I murmur not against Providence; but I declare that I never call to mind this evangelical society without experiencing the keenest regret. How happy would a

[64] In the Bible, Shem is the eldest of Noah's three sons.

little hut, situated in this delightful vale, have rendered the lives of Atala and me! There terminated all my hopes; there, with an adored spouse, unknown by men, and secreting my happiness in the depths of those forests, I should have glided through life like those rivers which have not even a name in the desert!

Instead of this peace which I then dared to promise myself, in what afflictions have I passed my days! The continual sport of fortune, shipwrecked upon every coast; a long time exiled from my native country; and finding nothing in it on my return but a cabin in ruins and friends forgotten in the tomb: such was to be the destiny of Chactas.

THE DRAMA

If my dream of prosperity was lively, it was at least of short duration; and the time of my awakening was on my arrival at the hermit's grotto. I was surprised on arriving there, in the middle of the day, not to see Atala coming forth to meet us. A sudden horror seized me; I felt my heart dissolving; and it seemed to me that the laurels of the mountain murmured in plaintive strains.

On approaching the grotto, I did not dare to call the daughter of Lopez by name. My imagination was equally tortured, either by the sound or the silence which succeeded my cries. Still more frightened by the night which reigned in the entrance of the rock, I said to the missionary, "O thou, whom Heaven inspires and fortifies, penetrate into these dark shades, and restore me my Atala!"

How feeble is he who is in subjection to his passions! How strong is he who puts his trust in God! There was more courage in that religious heart, withered by seventy-six years, than there was in all my youthful breast.

The man of peace entered the grotto, and I remained without, full of terror. Presently a feeble voice, like that of one moaning, proceeding from the caverns of the rock, struck my ear. Uttering a shriek, and summoning all my strength, I sprang into the dark recesses of the cavern—Spirits of my fathers! You only know the spectacle which there struck my eyes!

The hermit had lighted his candle of pine and was holding it with a trembling hand over Atala's couch. This young and beautiful woman, half-raised upon her elbow, exhibited a pale and disheveled picture. Drops of cold sweat glistened upon her forehead; her languishing eyes still sought to express to me her love, and her lips endeavored to smile.

Smitten as with a clap of thunder, my eyes fixed, my arms extended, my lips half-open, I stood motionless. A profound silence for a short time reigned among the three personages of this scene of grief. The hermit at length said, "This will be but a temporary fever, occasioned by fatigue; and if we resign ourselves to the will of God, He will have pity upon us."

At these words, the stagnated blood began again to circulate in my veins; and with the versatility of a savage I passed suddenly from despair to excess of hope. But Atala did not leave me long in this state. Sorrowfully nodding her head, she made a sign for us to approach her coach.

"My father," said she in a faltering voice, addressing herself to the monk, "the moment of death approaches! O Chactas! listen without despair to the fatal secret, which I have withheld from thee, with a view not to render thee too miserable, and in order to obey my mother.

"Beware of interrupting me by signs of grief, which

would shorten the few moments I have to live. I have many things to relate; and by the beatings of this heart, which already begin to slacken, by an unusual, chilling burden which my breast can hardly support, I am sensible I have no time to lose."

After a few moments' silence, Atala thus proceeded: "My unhappy fate commenced almost as soon as I saw the light. My mother brought me into the world at an evil hour,[65] soon after which my life was despaired of. To prolong my days, my mother made a vow. She promised the queen of angels that I should consecrate to her my virginity if I escaped death—fatal vow, which precipitates me to the tomb!

"In my sixteenth year I had the misfortune to lose my mother. A few hours before her departure, she called me to the side of her couch. 'My daughter,' said she, in the presence of a missionary, who consoled her in her last moments, 'my daughter, thou knowest the vow which I have made for thee. Wouldst thou belie thy mother? O my Atala! I am leaving thee in a world which is not worthy of possessing a Christian; in the midst of idolaters, who persecute the God of thy father, and mine; the God who, after having created thee, has preserved thee by a second miracle.

" 'Ah! my daughter, in accepting the veil of virgins thou dost no more than renounce the cares of the cabin and those fatal passions which have distracted the breast of thy mother! Come then, my dearly beloved; come, swear by this image of the Savior's mother, between the hands of this holy priest and thy expiring mother, that thou wilt not

[65] Expurgation: "My mother had conceived me in unhappiness; I wearied her bosom. She brought me into the world with great rendings of the bowels."

betray me in the face of Heaven. Consider that I bound myself for thee to save thy life, and that if thou keep not my promise thou wilt be less punished than thy mother, whose soul thou wilt plunge into everlasting torments.'

"O my mother! why didst thou talk thus! O religion! at once the source of my misery and my happiness! which ruins and consoles me! And thou, dear distressed object of a passion which consumes me even in the arms of death, thou seest now, O Chactas, what has caused the severity of our fate! Bursting into a flood of tears, and throwing myself on the bosom of my mother, I promised everything which she desired.

"The missionary pronounced over me the awful words, and gave me the scapulary[66] which bound me forever. My mother threatened me with her maledictions if ever I broke my vows; and after recommending to me inviolable secrecy with respect to the pagans, those persecutors of my religion, she expired, holding me in her embraces.

"I did not at first know the danger of my oaths. Full of zeal, and a true Christian, proud of the Spanish blood which circulated through my heart, I saw no one of all the men around me worthy of my hand. I prided myself in having no other husband than the God of my mother. I saw thee, a prisoner, young and beautiful; I was moved with pity at thy lot; I ventured to speak to thee at the fire of the camp. Then I felt all the weight of my vows."

As Atala finished pronouncing these words, I clenched my fists, and looking at the missionary with a menacing air

[66] Scapulary, "A kind of veil which all the nuns wear" (Translator). Rather the name of pieces of consecrated cloth worn on the person or upon the costume of a member of a religious order.

I vehemently exclaimed, "There is that religion of which you have boasted so much! Perish the oath which robs me of Atala! Perish that God who contradicts nature! Man! Priest! for what purpose came you into these forests?"

"To save thee," said the old man, with a terrible voice; "to calm thy passions, and to prevent thee, blasphemer, from drawing down upon thyself the wrath of heaven! It ill becomes thee, young man, scarcely entered into life, to complain of thy afflictions! Where are the marks of thy sufferings? Where is the injustice which thou hast sustained? Where are thy virtues, which alone could give thee any right of complaint? What services hast thou rendered, what good hast thou done?

"Ah! wretched man! thou offerest me nothing but passions; and thou darest to accuse Heaven! When thou, like Father Aubry, shalt have passed thirty years in exile upon the mountains, thou wilt be less prompt to judge of the designs of Providence. Thou wilt then see that thou knowest nothing, that thou art nothing; and that there is no chastisement, however severe, no evils, however terrible, which depraved human nature does not deserve to suffer."

The lightning which flashed from the eyes of the old man, his beard which struck his breast, and his thundering words made him appear like a deity. Overwhelmed with his majesty, I fell at his feet and begged his pardon for my outrageous expressions.

"My son," he replied, with accents so soft that remorse penetrated my soul; "my son, it is not on my own account that I have reprimanded you. Alas! you are too much in the right, my dear child! I came into these forests to do but very little; and God has not a more unworthy servant than myself. But, my son, Heaven! Heaven! that is what we

must never accuse. Pardon me, if I have offended you; but attend to your sister. Perhaps there is a remedy; let us not cease to hope. Chactas, that is a religion truly divine which has made a virtue of hope."

"My young friend," continued Atala, "thou hast been witness to my conflicts, though thou hast seen but a small part of what I have endured. As much as was in my power, I stifled my distresses in my own bosom. No, the black slave who moistens with his sweat the scorching sands of Florida is less wretched than Atala has been—entreating thee to fly, and yet certain of dying if separated from thee; fearing to accompany thee in thy flight through the desert, though panting after the shady groves and invoking solitude aloud!

"Ah! had I been forced only to forsake parents, friends, and country; had it been (frightful thought!) the loss of my own soul only!—But thy ghost, O my mother! thy ghost was always haunting me, and upbraiding me as the cause of its torments! I heard thy groans and saw the flames of hell devouring thee! My nights were restless and full of visions; my days were days of sorrow. The dew of the evening dried as it fell upon my burning skin. I opened my lips to the breezes; but the gentle gales, instead of refreshing me, kindled into flames from my breath!

"What torment, to see thee continually near me, far from all the rest of the world, in a dreary wilderness, and to know that between thee and me was an invincible barrier! To spend my life at thy feet, to serve thee as a slave, to dress thy food and make thy bed in some dark corner of the universe would have been for me happiness supreme. This state of felicity I reached, but could not enjoy! What plan have I not devised? What dream has not been cherished by this sorrowful heart of mine?

"Sometimes, fixing my eyes upon thee in the desolate groves I went so far as to frame wishes as foolish as they were wicked. At one time I wished to be, with thee, the only living creature on earth; at another time, feeling a divinity which arrested me, in the paroxysms of my horrid transports I desired that this divinity might be annihilated, provided that, clasped in thy arms, I might wander from abyss to abyss among the ruins of God and the world!

"Even now—shall I speak it?—at this present time, when I am launching into eternity, when I am going to appear before a righteous Judge; at the moment when, for the sake of obeying my mother, I see with joy my oath of celibacy destroying my life, by an unaccountable contradiction I carry with me regret for not having been thine!"

"My daughter," interrupted the missionary, "your pains bewilder you. This excess of passion by which you suffer yourself to be controlled is rarely just. It does not even belong to our natural constitution, and on that account it is less reprehensible in the sight of God, because it is rather some error of the understanding than a vice of the heart. You ought therefore to banish from your mind those wild transports, so unbecoming your innocence.

"But then, my dear child, your impetuous imagination has too much alarmed you with respect to your vows. Religion does not require of us a sacrifice beyond the power of humanity. Its true sentiments, its temperate virtues are far above the exalted sentiments and forced virtues of a pretended heroism. If you had fallen, poor straying lamb, the good Shepherd would have sought you to bring you back to the flock. The treasures of repentance were open to you. It requires rivers of blood to efface faults, in the opinion of men; one single tear suffices, in the sight of God.

"Take courage, my dear daughter; your situation requires tranquillity. Let us address the Lord, who healeth all the diseases of his servants. If it be his will that you should recover from this disorder, as I hope it is, I will write to the bishop of Quebec, who has the necessary powers to release you from your vows, which are but ordinary vows; and you shall finish your days near me, with Chactas, your husband."

At these words of the old man, Atala was seized with strong convulsions, from which she did not recover till she had exhibited frightful symptoms of distress. "How!" said she, joining her hands in admiration, "there was a remedy! I could be released from my vows!"

"Yes, my daughter," said the father; "and you can be, still."

"It is too late, it is too late!" cried Atala. "Must I die the very moment I learn that I could be happy! Oh that I had known this holy man before! What happiness might I have enjoyed this day! With thee, with Christian Chactas! . . . . consoled, encouraged by this venerable priest . . . . in this desert forever! . . . . Oh, this would have been too great a happiness!"

"Quiet thyself," said I, seizing one of the hands of this unfortunate creature; "quiet thyself; we shall soon taste this felicity."

"Never! never!" said Atala.

"How!" replied I.

"Thou dost not know all," she cried; "yesterday—during the storm—you urged me to promise you—it was your fault—I was upon the point of virtually breaking my vows, by resolving in my heart that I would become your wife—I was near plunging my mother into the flames of the bottomless

pit.[67] Already her curses were upon me—already I had lied to God who saved my life! When you kissed my trembling lips, you did not know, you little thought, that you were embracing death!"

"Gracious heaven!" cried the missionary; "dear child, what have you done?"

"I have committed a crime, my father," said Atala, with eyes wild and staring; "but I have ruined none but myself; I have saved my mother."

"Go on, then," cried I, full of terror, "tell us all, I pray."

"Well, then," said she, "I had foreseen my weakness; and on leaving the cabins, I brought away with me—"

"What?" I exclaimed with horror.

"Poison!" said the father.

"It is in my bosom," cried Atala.

The torch drops from the hand of the missionary, I fall lifeless by the side of the unfortunate girl; the old man clasps us both in his paternal arms, and all three for a few moments in the dark, mingle our sobs upon this couch of death.

"Let us awake! let us awake!" presently cries the courageous hermit, lighting a lamp. "The moments we lose are precious. Let us, like intrepid Christians, brave the assaults of adversity. Let us in a humble and penitent manner, throw ourselves at the feet of the Most High and implore his mercy in restoring health or in preparing us to submit to his decrees. Perhaps there is time yet—my daughter, you should have told me last evening."

"Alas! my father," said Atala, "I sought thee last night; but heaven, as a punishment for my sins, had taken thee

[67] Bingham has expanded this passage. Read: "During the storm I was about to break my vow, I was plunging my mother into the flames of the abyss."

away from me. All succors elsewhere would have been useless; for the Indians themselves, so expert in poisons, know no remedy for that which I have taken. O Chactas! judge of my surprise, when I found that the stroke was not so sudden as I expected! My love redoubled my strength; my soul would not so soon separate itself from thee."

It was not now by sobbings that I interrupted Atala's recital, but by those violent emotions which are known only to savages. I rolled myself furiously upon the ground, wringing my arms, and biting my hands. The old priest, with surprising tenderness, ran from brother to sister and lavished upon us kindnesses without number. In all the calmness of his heart and under the weight of years he knew how to adapt his language to our youthful feelings, and his sublime religion furnished him with accents more tender and more affecting than our passions themselves. This priest, who during forty years had devoted each day to the service of God and men among these mountains, represented to my mind a vast burnt offering, smoking perpetually upon the high places before the Lord.

Alas! it was in vain that he attempted to procure any remedy for Atala's disease. Fatigue, chagrin, poison, and a passion more mortal than all poisons united, conspired to ravish this flower from the forest. Towards evening, alarming symptoms made their appearance; a universal numbness seized Atala's limbs, and the extremities began to grow cold.

"Touch my fingers," said she to me; "do they not feel like ice?" I knew not what to answer; and my hair rose up with horror. At length she added, "But yesterday, my dearly beloved, thy simple touch made me start, and now I do not feel thy hand—I scarcely hear thy voice—the objects of the grotto disappear, one after another. Are not the birds

singing? The sun must be now setting—Chactas! his rays will be very beautiful upon my tomb in the desert."

Atala, perceiving that these words forced us into tears, said, "Pardon me, my good friends, I am very weak; but perhaps I am going to grow stronger. Yet to die so young! all of a sudden! when my heart was so full of life!—Director of prayer, have pity upon me, and support me. Do you believe that my mother will be satisfied, and that God will pardon what I have done?"

"My daughter," replied the good monk, shedding tears, and wiping them with his trembling and mutilated fingers; "my daughter, all your misfortunes arise from your ignorance. Your savage education and the want of necessary instruction have undone you. You did not know that a Christian has no right to dispose of his life. Console yourself, then, my dear lamb; God will pardon you, on account of the simplicity of your heart. Your mother and the imprudent missionary who directed her have been more culpable than you. They have exceeded their powers, in extorting from you an indiscreet vow. But the Lord's peace be with them. You three exhibit a dreadful example of the danger of enthusiasm and the want of light in matters of religion. Take courage, my child; He who searcheth the heart and trieth the reins will judge you according to your intentions, which were pure, and not according to your action, which was wrong.

"As to life, if the hour is come when you are to sleep in the Lord, how little do you lose, my dear child, by losing the world! In spite of solitude, in which you have lived, you have seen troubles; what would you have thought, then, if, upon landing on the shores of Europe, your ear had been struck with that long cry of distress which arises from the

Old World! The inhabitants of cabins and those of palaces all suffer; all groan here below. Queens have been seen weeping, like women in common life, and it has been astonishing to see the quantity of tears which the eyes of kings have shed.

"Is it your love which you regret? My daughter, you might as well lament a dream. Do you know the heart of man, and could you count the changes of his desires? You might sooner number the waves which are rolled by the sea in a tempest. Atala, sacrifices and favors are not eternal ties; one day, perhaps, disgust might come with satiety, the past would be counted for nothing, and no more would be seen than the inconveniences of a union poor and despised.

"Undoubtedly, my daughter, the purest loves were those of that man and that woman who were created by the immediate hand of the Lord. A paradise was prepared for them; they were innocent and immortal. Perfect, both in soul and body, they agreed in everything. Eve was created for Adam, and Adam for Eve. If they, nevertheless, were not able to continue in that state of happiness, what couple after them could expect to do it?

"I will not speak to you concerning the marriages of the first born of men, those ineffable connections when sister was spouse to the brother; when love and fraternal affection were blended in the same heart, and the purity of the one augmented the delight of the other. All these unions have been interrupted; jealousy crept to the altar of green turf, where the kid was sacrificed; it reigned under the tent of Abraham, and in the dwellings of the patriarchs.[68] Would

[68] Expurgation: "under the tent of Abraham and in those beds where the patriarchs found such joy that they forgot their mother's death."

you flatter yourself, then, my dear child, that you should be more innocent, and more happy in your connections than these pious families from whom Jesus Christ chose to derive his birth?

"I spare you the details of family cares, the disputes, mutual reproaches, inquietudes, and all those secret pangs which attend the marriage state. Woman marries in tears, and she renews her pains every time she becomes a mother. How much distress is caused by the loss only of a new-born babe, nursed by its mother, and which dies at her breast! The mountain was full of lamentation; nothing could comfort Rachel,[69] because her sons were no more.

"This bitterness, added to the tender feelings of the human heart, operates so powerfully that we see great ladies, beloved by kings, quit the court to bury themselves in cloisters and mutilate this rebellious flesh, whose pleasures are but pains.[70]

"But perhaps you will say that these last examples do not concern you; that your ambition extended no further than to live in an obscure cabin with the man of your choice; that you sought less the delights of Hymen than the charms of that folly which youth calls love. Illusion, chimera, vanity, dream of a disordered imagination!

"And I also, my daughter, I myself have experienced tempests of the heart. This head has not always been bald, nor this breast always so undisturbed as it appears to you this day. Trust to my experience: if man, constant in his affec-

[69] "Rachel, weeping for her children, refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not." Jeremiah xxxi: 15.

[70] Allusion to Mademoiselle Louise de la Vallière, mistress of Louis XIV, who publicly left the court in April 1674 to enter the Carmelite order.

tions, could without ceasing furnish himself with thoughts, renewed in endless succession, undoubtedly solitude and love would make a little heaven below; for these are two things with which the Deity himself is well pleased.[71] But the soul of man tires; and it never for a long time together ardently loves the same object. There are always certain points in which two hearts do not unite; and this will prove sufficient, in time, to render life insupportable.

"Finally, my dear daughter, the great fault of men is that they forget, during their dream of happiness, that infirmity of their nature, Death. Nature must have an end; it must dissolve. Sooner or later, however prosperous had been your situation, this beautiful face would have changed into that uniform appearance which the sepulcher gives to the family of Adam; and even the eye of Chactas could not have distinguished you among your sisters of the tomb. Love does not extend its empire over the worms of the coffin. What do I say? (O vanity of vanities!) Why do I speak of the strength of the world's friendship!

"Would you, my dear daughter, know the full extent of it? If a man should return to the light a few years after his death, I doubt whether he would be received with joy, even by those very persons who shed the most tears to his memory. So soon do we form new connections! so easily do we acquire different habits! so natural is inconstancy to man! of so little value is our life, even in the estimation of our friends!

"Return thanks then, my dear daughter, to your merciful Creator, who takes you so soon from this vale of tears. Already the white robe and glittering crown of virgins are

[71] Read: "solitude and love would make him equal to God himself, for those are the two eternal delights of the great Being."

preparing for you in the clouds. Already I hear the queen of angels crying to you, 'Come, my worthy handmaid, come, my dove, come, and sit upon a throne of light, among all those daughters who have sacrificed their beauty and their youth to the service of humanity, to the education of children, and to the great work of penitence. Come, mystic rose, unite yourself to Jesus Christ. That coffin which you have chosen for your nuptial bed will not be betrayed by your heavenly spouse, and his conjugal affection will last forever.' "

As the last ray of day abates the winds and diffuses calm through the sparkling heavens, so the peaceful words of the old man appeased the boisterous passions in the breast of my beloved. She appeared wholly occupied with my grief and in devising means to enable me to support her loss. At one time she told me that she should die happy if I would promise her to dry up my tears; at another time she talked to me of my mother, of my country, and endeavored to divert my thoughts from the present object of my distress by reviving in my mind other recollections.

She exhorted me to patience and to virtue. "Thou wilt not always be unhappy," said she. "If heaven is trying thee this day, it is only to render thee more compassionate to others' woes. The heart, O Chactas! is like those kinds of trees which do not yield their balsam for the wounds of men till they themselves have been wounded by the steel."

When she had thus spoken, she turned towards the missionary and besought him for that consolation which she had enabled me to experience; and alternately consoling and being consoled, she dispensed and received the word of life upon the bed of death.

The hermit redoubled his zeal in proportion as our dis-

tress increased. His whole tottering frame was reanimated with the ardor of charity; and while continually employed in preparing medicines, kindling the fire, and airing the bed, he delivered admirable discourses concerning God and the blessedness of the just. With the torch of religion in his hand, he seemed to precede Atala in the tomb, to point out to her its wonderful mysteries. All the humble grotto was filled with the grandeur of this Christian death;[72] and celestial spirits were doubtless attentive to this scene, where religion alone struggled with love, youth, and death.

Thus divine religion triumphed; and by its victory we felt in our hearts a pious resignation succeeding to the first transports of grief. Towards midnight Atala seemed strengthened to repeat her prayers, which the monk pronounced at her bedside. A little while after she reached me her hand, and with a voice scarcely audible she said, "Son of Outalissi, do you recollect that first night, when you took me for the virgin of the last love? O singular presage of our destiny!"

After a little pause, she proceeded: "When I reflect that I am leaving thee forever, my heart makes such an effort to revive that I feel almost the power of rendering myself immortal by the force of love. But, O my God, thy will be done!" Atala was silent for a few moments, after which she added, "Nothing remains for me now but to ask your pardon for the ills I have caused you. I have tormented you very much by my pride and my caprice. Chactas, a little earth thrown over my body is going to put a whole world betwixt you and me and to free you forever from the weight of my misfortunes."

"Pardon you!" answered I, drowned in tears; "is it not I

[72] Bingham had translated *trépas chrétien*, "dying Christian."

who have caused all your afflictions?" "My friend," said she, interrupting me, "you have rendered me too happy; and were I to recommence my life, I would again prefer the satisfaction of having loved you a few days in lonely exile to a whole life of repose in my native country."

Here the voice of Atala failed; the shades of death spread themselves around her eyes and her mouth; her wandering fingers sought to touch something; and she whispered softly to invisible spirits. By and by, making an effort, she assayed, but in vain, to tear from her neck the little crucifix. She prayed me to untie it myself.

"When I spake to thee, the first time," said she, "at the fire of the camp, thou sawest this cross sparkle upon my breast; it is all the treasure which Atala possesses. Lopez, thy father and mine, sent it to my mother, at my birth. Receive then from me this heritage, O my brother! Preserve it in memory of my woes. Thou wilt have recourse to this God of the unfortunate, in the trials of life; and thou wilt perhaps shed one tear for thy beloved.

"Chactas, I have one last request to make of thee. Friend! our union could not have been but short upon earth; but there is, after this life, a longer life. How dreadful it would be to be separated from thee forever! I do but go before thee this day; and I go to await thee in the celestial world. If thou hast loved me, young idolater, make thyself acquainted with the Christian religion, and embrace it; which will insure our eternal reunion.

"This divine religion is now working before thine eyes a great miracle, since it renders me capable of quitting thee without dying in the agonies of despair. Nevertheless, I do not wish from thee any more than a simple promise. I know too well what it costs, to demand of thee an oath.

Perhaps that vow would separate thee from some woman more happy than myself. But can another love thee like Atala?—O my mother, pardon thy wandering daughter! O Virgin, restrain thy wrath! I am falling again into my weaknesses; and I rob thee, O my God! of thoughts which ought to be devoted wholly to thee."

Wounded with grief, and sighing as if my heart would break, I promised Atala that I would one day embrace the Christian religion. At this spectacle the old man, rising up with an air of inspiration and stretching forth his arms towards the arch of the grotto, cried, "It is time, it is time to pray that God would afford us his presence."

No sooner had he pronounced these words than I was constrained to fall upon my knees and incline my head towards Atala's couch. The priest prostrated himself and prayed fervently.[73] He then opened a secret closet and took out a piece of sacred bread, as white as snow, and approached Atala, pronouncing mysterious words. That saint had her eyes raised towards heaven in ecstasy. All her pains appeared suspended; all the remains of life seemed to be collected round her mouth. She opened her lips,[74] and received the mystic bread with reverence and with prayer.

After that, the pious old man dips a little cotton in consecrated oil; anoints the temples of Atala; looks a few

[73] Insert after these words: "The grotto seemed suddenly illuminated, the words of angels and the trembling of heavenly harps were heard in the air, and when the anchorite withdrew the holy vessel from the tabernacle, I thought I saw God Himself come forth from the mountainside."

[74] Insert: "and her tongue came forth in deep respect to seek the God held out to her by the hand of the priest."

moments upon his dying daughter; then, all at once, pronounces these solemn words: "Depart, Christian soul, and go to join your Creator!" I then, raising my declined head and observing the vase which contained the holy oil, cried, "My father! will that remedy restore Atala to life?" "Yes, my son," said the old man, "to life eternal!" Atala at that moment expired.

——In this place, for the second time after the commencement of his narrative, Chactas was obliged to break off. His tears overwhelmed him, and his tongue uttered but half-broken sentences. The blind Sachem opened his bosom, and took from thence the crucifix of Atala. There, cried he, is the badge of adversity! O René! O my son! thou seest it. As for me, I shall never see it more! Tell me, after so many years, is not the gold changed? Canst thou not discern in it the channel of my tears? Canst thou not discover the place where the lips of a saint have kissed it? How is it then that Chactas is not yet a Christian? What frivolous reasons, either political, or local as they respect his own country, have hitherto retained him in the errors of his fathers? No, I will not delay much longer. The earth cries to me, "When wilt thou descend into the tomb? and why dost thy delay to embrace a divine religion?" O earth! thou shalt not wait for me long! As soon as a priest shall have restored, with the water of life, youth to this head, bleached by adversity, I hope to be reunited to Atala. But let us finish what remains to be related of my history.

THE FUNERAL

I will not attempt, O René! to paint in your imagination at this period, the desperation of my soul when Atala had

breathed her last. To do this, I should have need of more warmth than I now possess; it would be necessary that my closed eyes should open again to the sun, to request of him the number of tears which they have shed in his light. Yes, this moon, which shines at present upon our heads, shall cease to illuminate the solitudes of Kentucky; the Ohio, which now wafts our periaguas, shall stop the current of its waters, before my tears shall cease to flow to the memory of Atala.

For two whole days I was insensible to the discourses of the hermit. In endeavoring to assuage my grief that excellent man made no use of the futile reasonings of the world. He contented himself by saying to me, "My son, it is the will of God," and then he clasped me in his arms. I never could have believed that there was so much consolation in those few words of the resigned Christian if I had not myself experienced it.

The tenderness, the unction, and the unalterable patience of the old servant of the Most High at length overcame the obstinacy of my grief. I was ashamed that I had caused him to shed so many tears. "My father," said I to him, "this is too much; may the passions of a young man disturb the peace of thy days no longer. Let me take away the remains of my beloved. I will bury them in some corner of the desert; and if I am henceforth doomed to live, I will try to render myself worthy of those eternal nuptials which have been promised me by Atala."

At this unexpected return of courage, the good father leaped for joy, and cried, "O blood of Jesus Christ! blood of my divine Master! I acknowledge thy merits. Thou wilt, without doubt, save this young man. O my God! finish thy work. Restore peace to this troubled soul, and leave him

nothing of his afflictions but a useful and humble remembrance."

The holy man refused to commit to my care the body of my beloved but proposed that his flock should come and bury the daughter of Lopez with all Christian pomp. This I refused, in my turn. "The misfortunes and the virtues of Atala," said I, "have been unknown to the world; may her grave, privately dug by thy hand and mine, partake of this obscurity." We agreed that we would set out the next morning, at the rising of the sun, to inter Atala under the arch of the natural bridge, at the entrance of the groves of death. It was also resolved that we should spend the night in prayer by the body of this saint.

Towards evening we transported these precious remains to an opening of the grotto, facing towards the north. The hermit had wrapped them in a piece of European linen spun by the hands of his mother, the only article of treasure remaining of the little which he brought from his own country, and which for a long time he had destined for the use of his own tomb.

Atala was laid upon a parterre of sensitive plants of the mountains; her head, her shoulders, and part of her bosom being uncovered. In her hair was seen a faded magnolia flower, the very same which I had placed there as she lay sleeping on her bed in the morning. Her lips, like a rose the second morning after gathering, seemed to languish and to smile. In her cheeks, of surprising whiteness, were seen a few veins of blue; her beautiful eyes were closed; her alabaster hands pressed upon her heart an ebony crucifix, and the scapulary of her vows surrounded her neck.

She appeared enchanted by the angel of melancholy and the double sleep of innocence and of the tomb. I have never

seen anything more heavenly; and whoever had been ignorant that this vestal had ever enjoyed the light would have been ready to take her for the statue of the sleeping virgin.

The monk did not cease to pray during the whole night. I sat in silence upon the bolster of Atala's death-bed. How many times, during her sleep, had I supported upon my knees that charming head! How many times had I leaned over it to hear her breathe! But now no sound proceeded from that immovable bosom; and it was in vain that I waited the revival of beauty.

The pale moon lent her glimmering rays to this funeral wake. She rose at midnight, like a white-robed vestal who comes to weep over the coffin of a companion. Presently she diffused through the woods that great secret of melancholy which she loves to communicate to the old oaks and to the ancient shores of seas. From time to time the monk dipped a flowery branch into consecrated water, and, sprinkling all around, he perfumed the air with the balm of heaven. Occasionally he repeated certain verses from an old poet named Job, saying,

"I have passed away as a flower; I am withered as the grass of the fields . . . ."

"Wherefore was the light given to a miserable man, and life to those who are in bitterness of soul?"[75]

Thus sung the ancient of men. His grave and modulating voice resounded afar through the silent groves. The name of God and of the tomb was echoed back from all the hills and all the forests. The cooings of the Virginia dove, the falls of a torrent in a mountain, the tinkling of the bell

[75] Verses from Job xiv : 2, and Psalm cii : 11. The last verse is from Job iii : 20.

which called the travelers, all joined in chorus with these funeral hymns; and it seemed as if we heard, in the groves of death, the choir of departed spirits responding from afar to the voice of the hermit.

In the meantime, a streak of gold appeared in the east. The sparrowhawks chattered on the tops of the rocks, and the martens retired into the holes of the elms. This was the signal for conveying away the body of Atala. I took the corpse upon my shoulders; the hermit walked before, carrying a spade. We began to descend the mountain from rock to rock, old age and death equally retarding our steps.

At the sight of the dog which had found us in the forest, and which now, capering with joy, pointed out to us another path, I fell into tears. Frequently Atala's long locks, waving with the morning breezes, spread their veil over my eyes; oftentimes, sinking under the load, I was obliged to lay it down upon the moss and seat myself by it to recover my strength.

At length we arrived at the place marked out by my grief. We descended under the arch of the bridge. O my son! figure in your imagination a young savage and an old Christian hermit upon their knees, one opposite to the other in the desert, digging with their own hands a grave for a poor girl, whose body was lying near the place, in a deep ravine formed by a flood.

When our work was finished, we laid this beauty in her bed of clay. Alas! I had hoped to prepare for her a very different couch! After that, taking a little dust, and observing a doleful silence, I fixed my eyes for the last time upon the face of Atala; then I scattered the ancient earth over the face of eighteen summers.

I saw the features of my beloved gradually disappear, and

her graces hiding themselves under the curtain of eternity. Her bosom, for a while, surmounted the blackened earth, as a white lily grows up from the midst of dark clay. I then cried out, "Lopez! see thy son bury thy daughter!" And I finished covering Atala with the earth of sleep.

We then returned to the grotto, and I imparted to the missionary the project I had formed of fixing my residence near him. The good man, who had a perfect knowledge of the human heart, discerned my thoughts and the remains of my grief. And he thus addressed me: "Chactas, son of Outalissi, while Atala lived, I urged you to take up your residence in these deserts; but now your circumstances are changed; you owe yourself to your country.

"Believe me, my son, grief does not last forever. Sooner or later, it must have an end, for the heart of man has an end: and this is one great source of our miseries, that we are not even capable of being a long time unhappy. Return to the Meschaceba; go and comfort your mother, who weeps for you daily, and who has need of your support. Instruct yourself in the religion of your dear Atala, whenever you shall find opportunity; and remember that you have promised her to be virtuous and to become a Christian. I will watch here over the tomb of your sister.—Depart, my son. God, the soul of your love, and the thoughts of your old friend of the mountain will follow you through the desert."

Such were the words of the man of the rock. His authority was too great, his wisdom too profound, not to command obedience and respect. On the day following I took my leave of my venerable host, who, pressing me to his heart, gave me his last counsels, his last benedictions, and his last tears. I proceeded to the tomb of Atala. I was surprised to find there a little crucifix, which stood over the

grave of the dead as the mast of a vessel still appears after the ship is wrecked. I conjectured that the monk had been praying at the tomb during the night.

This mark of friendship and of religion on the part of the old man made my tears flow afresh. I was tempted to open the grave and take one more look at my beloved; but a religious fear restrained me. I seated myself upon the ground lately dug up. With one elbow on my knees and leaning my head upon my hand I remained buried in thoughts of the most bitter and distressing kind.

——O René! it was here that I reflected seriously for the first time, on the vanity of our days and the greater vanity of our projects. Ah, my child! Who has not made these reflections! I am but an old hart, whitened by the winters; my years will bear numbering with those of the crow. Well, notwithstanding so many days have multiplied over my head, notwithstanding all my experience in life, I have never yet met with a man who had not been deceived in his dreams of felicity, who did not secrete some wound in his heart.

The heart, apparently most serene, resembles the natural well in the savanna of Alachua, the surface of which appears calm and pure; but when you look to the bottom of the tranquil basin, you there discover a large crocodile which the well nourishes in its waters.

Having thus seen the sun rise and set upon this place of grief, the next morning at the first cry of the pelican, I prepared to leave this sacred burying-ground. I departed from it as from the goal from which I would start in the race of virtue. Three times I invoked the ghost of Atala; three times the genius of the desert answered me under the funeral arch. After that I saluted the east and discovered

at a distance, in a by-path of the mountain, the hermit, who was going to the cabin of some unfortunate person.

Falling upon my knees, and closely embracing the grave, I cried, "Sleep quietly in this strange land, unfortunate girl! As the price of thy love, of thy exile, and of thy death, thou art now about to be forsaken, even by Chactas!" Then shedding a flood of tears, I parted from the daughter of Lopez; then I tore myself away from those lonely places, leaving, at the foot of Nature's pompous monument, a monument still more august—the humble tomb of virtue.

EPILOGUE

Chactas, son of Outalissi, of the tribe of Natchez, related this history to René, the European. The fathers have told it to their children, and I, a traveler to distant lands, have faithfully narrated it to thee, reader, as I received it from the Indians.

I have observed in this narrative many things worthy of notice: the picture of people of the chase, and husbandmen; religion, the first legislatrix of a savage; the dangers of ignorance and religious enthusiasm, contrasted with light and toleration, and with the genuine spirit of the gospel; the combats of passions and virtues in a simple heart; in fine, the triumph of Christianity over a passion the most ungovernable, and a fear the most terrible—love, and death.

When a Seminole recited to me this history, I found it very instructive and perfectly beautiful; because he added to it the flowery language of the desert, the grace of the cabin, and a simplicity of relating sorrows which I do not flatter myself to have preserved.

But one thing still remained for me to know. I inquired what had become of Father Aubry; but no one could tell me. And I should always have remained ignorant and thou also, reader, if Providence, who conducts all things, had not discovered to me the thing which I sought. Observe how it happened.

I had traveled all over the country bordering on the Meschaceba, which formed, on the south, the magnificent boundaries of New France; and I had the curiosity to see,

on the north, the other wonder of this empire, the cataract of Niagara. I had arrived near to these falls in the ancient country of the Agonnonsioni,[76] when one morning, as I was crossing a plain, I discovered a woman sitting under a tree and holding a dead child in her lap. Moved at this sight, I softly approached the young mother and heard her addressing her infant in the following manner:

"If thou hadst remained among us, with what grace thy hand would have bent the bow! With a nervous arm thou wouldst have seized the furious bear; and thou wouldst have challenged to the race, on the mountains, the swiftest-footed elk. White ermine of the rock! thou art too young to go to the land of souls! How wilt thou be able to live there? Thy father is not there to provide for thee by hunting. Thou wilt be cold, and no spirit will give thee a skin for thy covering. Oh! I must make haste to follow thee, to sing thee songs, and give thee suck."

And the young mother, after having delivered this funeral oration according to the custom of the inhabitants of the desert, sang in a tremulous voice, rocked the infant on her knees, moistened its lips with maternal milk, and lavished upon the dead all those cares she was wont to bestow upon the living child.

This woman was desirous of drying the body of her infant upon the branches of a tree, after the manner of the Indians, that she might afterwards carry it to the tombs of its fathers. She presently began the mournful and religious ceremony. Undressing her son, and breathing a few minutes upon his mouth, she said: "Soul of my son! charming

[76] "The Iroquois" (C). According to Charlevoix, Vol. I, p. 421, quoted by Cloran, the name given ni the text means "cabin-builders."

shade! the great Spirit at first created thee by his breath.[77] Alas! mine has not power to restore thee to life!" Then she opened her bosom and for the last time pressed to her heart these cold remains, which would there have been reanimated had not God withheld the breath which giveth life.

She arose and cast her eyes around upon the forest, then beautified with Aurora's blush, in search of a tree, upon the branches of which she might expose the body of her son. She chose a maple with red blossoms, all festooned with garlands of apios[78] and which exhaled the sweetest perfumes. With one hand she bent down the lower boughs and with the other she placed upon them the body of her child. Then letting the branch go, it returned to its natural position, bearing the spoils of innocence, secreted in an odoriferous foliage.

Oh! how affecting is this Indian custom! In their aërial tombs, these bodies, penetrated by the ethereal substance, covered with tufts of verdure and flowers, refreshed by the dew, embalmed by the breezes, and rocked by them on the same branch where the nightingale has built its nest and makes its plaintive melody; these bodies, after having been thus exposed, lose all the deformity of the sepulcher. Whether it be the spoil of a young woman which the hand of a lover has suspended on the tree of death or the remains of an infant which a mother has placed in the habitations of little birds, the charm is equally affecting.

Tree of America! which, bearing bodies on thy branches, removest them from the mansion of men by conveying them towards that of God, I stop in transport under thy shade!

[77] Expurgation: "Thy father created thee of yore by his kiss on my lips."

[78] The apios, or wild-bean, is mentioned by Charlevoix and Bartram.

In thy sublime allegory, I discover the tree of virtue: its roots grow in the dust of this world; its top is lost among the stars of the firmament; and its branches are the only ladder by which man, journeying upon this globe, can climb from earth to heaven.

Now, when the mother had put her child upon the tree, she tore out a lock of her hair and hung it among the leaves, whilst the breath of the morning rocked in his last sleep him whom maternal hands had so often lulled to sleep at the same hour in a cradle of moss. At this moment I stepped up to the woman, put both my hands on her head, and uttered the three cries of grief. Then, without speaking, we each one took a branch and set ourselves to brushing away the insects which buzzed about the body of the child.

But we took care not to frighten a dove which had a nest near the place, and which came from time to time to take a hair from the infant's head to make softer the bed of her little ones. The woman at length said, "Dove, if thou art not the soul of my son which has flown away, thou art, without doubt, a mother who seekest materials to make a cradle for thy children. Take this hair, which I shall never again wash in the water of esquine;[79] take it, and make a bed for thy little ones: and may the great Spirit preserve them!"

In the meantime the mother wept for joy at seeing the politeness of the stranger. As we were thus employed, a young man approached and said, "Daughter of Celuta, take away our child; we shall stay no longer here; we shall depart at the next sunrising." I then said, "Brother, I wish thee a

[79] Esquine, china-root or shrubby climbing smilax. Imlay, quoted by Chinard, says: "The Indians use esquine to make their hair grow long."

blue sky, plenty of deer, a beaver-skin coat, and fair prospects for the future. Thou art not then of this desert?"

"No," answered the young man, "we are exiles, and we are going in search of a country." In saying that, the warrior hung down his head, and with the end of his bow he beat the tops of the flowers. I saw the tears starting in his eyes, and inquired no further.[80]

The woman took down the body of her son from the branches of the tree and gave it to be carried by her husband. The young couple looked upon the infant and smiled even in their tears. Then I said, "Will you permit me to kindle your fire this night?"

"We have no wigwam,"[81] said the warrior. "If you will accompany us, we encamp near the falls."

"I will," replied I; and we set off together.

We presently arrived upon the borders of the cataract, which was announced by its tremendous roaring. It is formed by the river Niagara, which runs from Lake Erie, and empties into Lake Ontario. Its perpendicular height is one hundred and forty-four feet.[82] From Lake Erie to the cataract, the river descends very considerably all the way, and immediately above the falls appears more like a sea than a river, the waters of which are pressed into an open-mouthed gulf. The cataract divides into two branches, and curves in the form of a horseshoe. Between the two branches is an island, so undermined by the rapid stream that it actually hangs, with all its trees, over the frightful abyss.

[80] Chateaubriand's figure was bolder: "I saw that there were tears in the depths of this story and I kept silent."

[81] "Wigwam" substituted for "hut."

[82] "From late admeasurements, it is contended that the height is considerably greater" (Translator).

The mass of water which falls towards the south rolls up in a vast cylindrical form, then unfolds in a snowwhite sheet, and glitters in the sun with all the colors. That which falls towards the east descends into dismal shades, as one would say, from a column of water of the deluge. Rainbows rise in succession over the abyss; the waves, beating against the trembling rock, fly up in whirls of foam which rise above the trees like the smoke of a vast conflagration. Pine trees, wild walnuts, and rocks worn into various fantastic shapes decorate the scene. Eagles, drawn by the current of air, descend in a circular manner into the chasm; and carcajous suspend themselves by their long tails to the ends of bending branches, to seize in the abyss the carcasses of animals killed by passing over the falls.

While, with admiration bordering on terror, I contemplated this spectacle of nature's mighty work, the Indian woman and her spouse had left me. I sought for them by traveling along the river above the falls, and I found them in a place suited to their sorrows. They were lying upon the grass with a number of old people, near some human bones wrapped in skins of beasts. Astonished at everything which I had seen for a few hours preceding, I seated myself by the side of the young mother and thus addressed her:

"What does all this mean, my sister?" She answered, "My brother, this is the land of our nativity; and these are the bones of our ancestors, which follow us in our retreat."

"And how then," cried I, "have you been reduced to such a deplorable condition?" The daughter of Celuta replied, "We are the remains of the Natchez. After the great massacre of our nation by the French, in revenge for their brethren, those of our tribe who escaped the common calamity found an asylum among the Chickasaws, our neigh-

bors. We there lived a long time in peace; but seven months ago the whites of Virginia took possession of our lands, saying that they were given them by a European king. We raised our eyes to heaven, and, charged with the ashes of our ancestors, commenced our route across the desert. I was brought to bed on the march; and as my milk was rendered bad by reason of fatigue and distress, it poisoned my infant." Here the young mother wiped her eyes with her hair. I also wept.

Presently I resumed, "My sister, let us adore the great Spirit; all things come to pass by his order. The miserable will not always remain as they are. There is a place where they will weep no more. If I were not afraid of having a tongue as light as that of a white man, I would ask if you have ever heard anyone speak of Chactas of Natchez." At these words, the woman gazed upon me, and said, "Who has spoken to you about Chactas of Natchez?"

"His wisdom," replied I, "has made his name famous." The Indian woman then said, "I will tell you all I know concerning him, because you drove away the flies from the corpse of my son and because you have just spoken good words about the great Spirit. I am the daughter of the daughter of René the European, whom Chactas adopted. Chactas, who had received baptism, and René, my grandfather, perished in the massacre."

"Man always goes from one affliction to another," said I, leaning my head upon my hand. "You can then give me an account of Father Aubry?"[83]

"He was no more fortunate than Chactas," said the

[83] As Cloran stated, the account of the death of two missionaries, Father Jogues and Father de Brébeuf, as given by Charlevoix, suggests Chateaubriand's description of the martyrdom of Father Aubry.

woman. "We have learned that the Cherokees, enemies to the French, penetrated as far as the mission. They were led there by the sound of the bell which was rung to assist travelers. Father Aubry could have saved himself, but he would not abandon his children in their distress; and he remained to encourage them to die by his example. He was burned with great tortures. They never could extort a word or a groan from him, which should tend to dishonor his God or his country.

"He ceased not, during all his torments, to pray for his murderers and to compassionate the lot of other victims which he saw around him. Desiring to force some expression of weakness from this warrior of the heavenly forces, the Cherokees dragged before him a Christian savage whom they had mutilated in the most horrible manner. But they were greatly surprised when they saw the young man fall upon his knees and kiss the wounds of the old hermit, who cried out to him, with a serene countenance, 'My child, we have been presented as a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men!' The infuriated Indians plunged a red hot iron into his throat, to prevent his speaking any more. Not being able to give further consolation to his people, he then expired.

"It is said that the Cherokees, accustomed as they were to see savages suffer with firmness, could not but acknowledge that there was, in the humble courage of Father Aubry, something which was to them wholly unknown, and which surpassed the magnanimity of this world. Many among them, struck at this singular death, became Christians.

"Some years afterwards, Chactas, on his return from the land of the whites, having heard of the misfortunes of the director of prayer, set out to go and collect his ashes and

those of Atala. He traversed the desert and arrived at the place where the mission was situated; but he could hardly recollect it. The lake had overflowed its banks, and the savanna was turned into an impassable morass. The natural bridge, in falling down, had buried in its ruins the tomb of Atala and the groves of death. Chactas wandered about for a long time in these solitary places. He visited the hermit's grotto, which he found full of briars and raspberry bushes and in which a doe was suckling her fawn. He sat down upon the rock near which had rested the body of Atala during the funeral wake, where he found nothing but a few feathers fallen from the wing of the bird of passage.

"While he wept there in silence, the tame serpent of the missionary crept out from among the neighboring brambles, and twined itself at his feet. He caressed and warmed in his bosom his old friend, which remained alone in the midst of these ruins. The son of Outalissi has declared that many times in the dusk of the evening he saw the shade of Atala and that of Father Aubry in these solitudes. These visions filled him with a religious awe and a melancholy joy.

"After having sought to no purpose for the grave of the hermit and tried in vain to discover that of Atala, he was about to abandon these places when the doe of the grotto set to bounding and skipping before him in the most unusual manner. She stopped at the foot of the great cross of the mission. This cross was then half surrounded by water; its wood was overgrown with moss; and the birds of the desert loved to light upon its ancient branches.

"Chactas concluded that the grateful hind had conducted him to the tomb of the hermit. He dug under the rock which formerly served as an altar in times of sacrifice; and there he found the remains of a man and a woman. He

doubted not but they were those of the priest and of the virgin, which the angels had buried. He took them out of the ground, wrapped them in bear skins, and entered again on his journey through the desert bearing these precious remains, which resounded on his shoulders like the quiver of death. At night, he put them under his head, and he had dreams of love and of virtue. Thus laden, he arrived at Natchez. O stranger, thou canst contemplate these bones, with those of Chactas himself."

As the woman finished pronouncing these words, I arose, I approached the sacred remains, and prostrated myself before them in silence; then suddenly retreating to a respectful distance, I cried, "Thus passes away all that was good, virtuous, and amiable, upon earth. Man! thou art but a fleeting dream, a woeful shadow; thou dost not exist but by misery; thou art not anything but by the sorrows of thy heart and the eternal melancholy of thy soul!"

These reflections occupied my mind all the night, on the confines of the cataract, which I contemplated by the light of the moon. On the morrow at break of day my companions left me to continue their journey in the wilderness. The young warriors took the front, and the married women the rear; the former were charged with the sacred relics; the latter carried their infant children. The old people walked slowly in the middle, placed between their ancestors and their posterity; between those who were not and those who were to be; between past remembrances and future hopes; between a country lost and a country to be found.

Oh! How many tears bedew the wild waste when we thus abandon our natal soil; and when, from the top of the hill of exile, we view for the last time the roof of the cottage where we were born and nourished, and the river of

our cabin, which continues to glide in silent sadness through the solitary fields of our native country!

UNFORTUNATE INDIANS! whom I have seen wandering in the deserts of the New World, with the ashes of your ancestors! you who have afforded me hospitality, notwithstanding your wretchedness! I cannot recompense you at the present time, for I am wandering, as well as you, at the mercy of men; and, less happy in my exile, I have not brought with me the bones of my fathers.

FINIS

CHATEAUBRIAND'S PREFACE

[Caleb Bingham did not translate Chateaubriand's preface to the first edition of *Atala.* The editor of this reprint ventures to do so, for the sake of completeness and also because Chateaubriand garbled his original preface before issuing it as the *Préface de la première édition d'Atala,* when this story was republished with the story of *René* in 1805. The following letter was addressed to the editor of the *Journal des Débats* on March 31, 1801, and not in 1800, as dated in the author's second version.]

CITIZEN, In my work on the *Génie du Christianisme* or *The Beauties of the Christian Religion,* a whole part is devoted to the *poetics of Christianity.* This part is divided into three others: poetry, the fine arts, and literature; and these three parts are concluded by a fourth entitled "Harmonies of religion with natural scenery and the passions of the human heart." In this part I examine several subjects which could not enter the preceding ones, such as the effects of Gothic ruins compared with any other kind of ruins, sites of monasteries in lonely places, the poetical side of that popular worship which used to place crosses at the intersections of paths in the forests, which placed images of the Virgin and the saints on guard over springs and old elms, which believed in presentiments and ghosts, etc., etc. This part is concluded by an anecdote drawn from my travels in America, written under the very huts of the savages. It is entitled *Atala,* etc. Some proof-sheets of that little story having gone astray, I find myself obliged to print it separately, before my large work, to forestall an accident which would greatly wrong me.

If, Citizen, you should oblige me by publishing my letter, you would do me a great favor. I have the honor to be, etc.

One sees from the preceding letter what gave rise to the publication of *Atala* before my work on the *Génie du Christianisme,* of which it is a part. It only remains for me to give an account of the way that this story was composed.

I was still very young when I conceived the idea of achieving the epic of the natural man or of painting the manners of the savages by connecting them with some familiar event. After the discovery of America, I saw no subject more interesting, especially for the French, than the massacre of the Natchez colony in Louisiana in 1727. All the Indian tribes, after two centuries of oppression, conspiring to restore liberty in the New World seemed to me to offer almost as good a subject as the conquest of Mexico. I put a few fragments of that work on paper, but I soon saw that I lacked the true colors, and that if I wished to present a real likeness, it would be necessary to follow Homer's example and visit the peoples whom I wanted to paint.

In 1789 I told M. de Malesherbes of the plan that I had of going to America. But, wishing at the same time to give my journey a useful objective, I formed the plan of discovering by the overland route the much-sought passage concerning which Cook himself had left doubts. I set out, saw the American wilderness, and came back with plans for a second journey, which was to last nine years. I proposed to cross the whole North American Continent, then to ascend along the coast to the north of California and to return by Hudson's Bay, turning around the pole. If I did not die on this second journey, I would have made discoveries important for the sciences and useful to my country. M. de Malesherbes undertook to present my plans to the government, and it was at that time that he heard the first fragments of the little work which I am presenting to the

public today. We know what became of France up to the time when Providence brought forth one of those men whom she sends out as a sign of reconciliation when she has wearied of punishment. Covered with the blood of my only brother, of my sister-in-law, of that great old man, their father, having seen my mother and another talented sister die as a consequence of the treatment which they had experienced in their cells, I have wandered over foreign lands, where the only friend that remained to me stabbed himself in my arms.[1]

Of all my manuscripts concerning America, I saved only some portions, *Atala* in particular, which in itself was only an episode of *Les Natchez*. *Atala* was written in the desert, and under the huts of the savages. I do not know whether

[1] We had both been without food for two days, and the principles of human perfectibility had shown us that a little water dipped in the hollow of the hand from the public drinking fountains is sufficient to sustain a human life for that long a time. I would like this experiment to favor the progress of enlightenment, but I confess that I found it very hard.

While my family was thus slaughtered, imprisoned, and banished, one of my sisters who owed her liberty to the death of her husband happened to be at Fougères, a little Breton town. The royalist army arrived, eight hundred men of the republican army were captured and condemned to be shot. My sister threw herself at the feet of M. de La Rochejacquelin and obtained a pardon for the prisoners. She immediately flew to Rennes, presented herself before the revolutionary tribunal with the certificates which proved that she had saved the lives of eight hundred men, and asked that her sisters be set free as her sole reward. The president of the tribunal replied to her: *You must be a rascally royalist whom I shall have guillotined, since the bandits show you so much deference. Besides, the republic is in nowise grateful to you for what you have done; it has only too many defenders, and it lacks bread.* Behold the men from whom Bonaparte has delivered France!

the public will enjoy this story, which departs from all the beaten paths and presents scenes of nature and customs that are altogether foreign to Europe. There is no adventure at all in *Atala*. It is a sort of poem,[2] half descriptive, half dramatic; the whole thing consists of the painting of two lovers who walk and talk in solitude; all lies in the picture of the turmoil of love in the midst of the calm of the wilderness and the calm of religion. I gave the most ancient forms to this work; it is divided into prologue, recital, and epilogue. The principal parts of the recital bear a name, such as "The Hunter," "The Husbandman," etc.; and it was thus that in the first ages of Greece the rhapsodists sang under various titles the fragments of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

I will not conceal that I have sought extreme simplicity of subject-matter and style, save for the descriptive portion, and yet it is true that in description itself there is a way of being both pompous and simple at the same time. Telling what I attempted is not telling what I have accomplished. For a long time I have read only the Bible and Homer, happy if the fact is noticed, and I have blended with the tones of the wilderness the feelings peculiar to my own heart and the colors of these two great and eternal models of the beautiful and true. I will also say that my goal was not to wring out many tears. This seems to me a dangerous error advanced by M. de Voltaire, *that good works are those*

[2] In a time when everything in literature is corrupted I am obliged to give warning that if I make use of the word "poem" here, it is because I am unable to make myself understood otherwise. I am not one of those barbarians who confuse prose and verse. The poet, whatever may be said about this, is always *par excellence* the superior of other men, and whole volumes of descriptive prose are not worth fifty beautiful verses by Homer, Virgil, or Racine.

which cause the most weeping. There is a sort of drama whose authorship would be disclaimed by anyone which wrings the heart in a different way than does the *Iliad.* Because you torture the soul you are not a great writer. True tears are those caused to flow by beautiful poetry, as much admiration as grief must mingle therein.

It is Priam saying to Achilles:

Ἀνδρὸς παιδοφόνοιο ποτὶ στόμα χεῖρ' ὀρέγεσθαι.

"Judge the depths of my misfortune, since I kiss the hand that killed my sons" [*sic*].

It is Joseph exclaiming:

Ego sum Joseph, frater vester, quem vendidistis in Ægyptum!

"I am Joseph, your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt!"

Those are the only tears which should wet the strings of the harp and soften its notes. The Muses are heavenly maidens who do not disfigure their countenances with grimacing; when they weep, it is with the secret purpose of appearing more beautiful.

Besides, I am not at all enthusiastic about the savages, like M. Rousseau, and although I have perhaps as much ground to complain of society as that philosopher had to be thoroughly satisfied with it, I do not believe at all that "pure nature" is the most beautiful thing in the world. I have always found it very ugly wherever I have had occasion to see it. Far from entertaining the opinion that the man who thinks is a "depraved animal," I believe that thought makes man. All has been lost with this word "nature." Hence come the wearisome details of a thousand novels where everything is described down to the night-cap and the dressing-gown, hence come these infamous "dramas" which have

taken the place of the masterpieces of Racine. Let us paint nature, but beautiful nature; art should not concern itself with the imitation of monsters.

The morals that I wished to draw in *Atala* being easy to discover, and being found in the epilogue, I shall not speak of them here. I shall only say a word about my characters.

Atala, like *Philoctetes,* has only three characters. Perhaps a rather new kind of character will be found in the woman that I have sought to paint. The contradictions of the human heart are things which perhaps have not been sufficiently set forth, yet they should deserve examination all the more in that they are connected with the ancient tradition of an original fall of man, and in consequence they open deep vistas on everything great and mysterious in man and his story.

Chactas, Atala's lover, is a savage who is supposed to be born with genius and who is more than half civilized, since he knows not only the modern languages but also the dead languages of Europe. He must therefore express himself in a mixed style, in conformity with the line along which he moves, the border between society and nature. This gave me great advantages, by making him speak like a savage in the painting of customs and as a European in the drama and the narrative. Without this the work would have had to be given up; had I always made use of the Indian style, *Atala* would have been Hebrew for the reader.

Concerning the missionary, I believe that I have noticed that those who have brought a priest on the scene, up to the present, have either made him a criminal or a sort of *philosophe.* Father Aubry is nothing of that kind. He is a simple Christian who speaks of "the Cross, of the blood of

his divine Master, of the corruption of the flesh," etc., without blushing; in a word, he is the priest as he is. I know that it is difficult to paint such a character without arousing thoughts of ridicule in the minds of certain readers. If I move no one, I shall cause laughter; this is to be discovered.

After all, if one examines what I have introduced into so small a frame; if one thinks that there is not a single interesting circumstance of the manners of the savages on which I have not dwelt, not one beautiful effect of nature and not one fine site in New France which I have not described; if one notes that I placed beside the race of hunters a complete picture of an agricultural people to show the advantages of social life over the life of the savage; if attention be paid to the difficulties which I must have met in sustaining the dramatic interest with only two characters during a long presentation of customs and many descriptions of landscapes; if, finally, it is observed that in the catastrophe itself I relied on no helps and did not try to sustain myself except by the force of the dialogue, as did the ancients; these two considerations will provoke some indulgence for me on the part of the reader. Once again, I do not flatter myself that I have succeeded; but one should always be grateful to a writer who strives to bring literature back to that ancient flavor which is too often forgotten in our times.

One more thing remains to be said. I do not know by what chance a letter that I had addressed to Citizen Fontanes has excited the attention of the public much more than I expected. I believed that some lines of an unknown author would pass without being perceived; but I was mistaken. The press chose to speak of that letter, and people have done me the honor to write to me in person, and to

my friends, pages of compliments and insults. Though I was less surprised by the latter than by the former, I did not think that I had deserved the one or the other. Thinking over this whim of the public which had paid attention to something of so little value, I thought that this could have come from the title of my larger work, *Génie du Christianisme,* etc. Someone may have imagined that this was a party matter, and that I would speak very ill in this book of the Revolution and the *philosophes.*

It is doubtless permitted at present, under a government which does not proscribe any peaceful opinion, to come to the defense of Christianity as a subject of morality and of literature. There was a time when the adversaries of that religion alone had the right to speak. Now the lists are open, and those who think that Christianity is poetical and moral can say so out loud, as the *philosophes* can maintain the contrary. I venture to believe that if the great work which I have undertaken, and which will appear before long, were treated by a more skilful hand than mine, the question would be settled definitely.

However that may be, I am obliged to declare that the *Génie du Christianisme* is not concerned with the Revolution, and that for the most part I speak therein only of dead authors. As for the living authors who find themselves named in it, they will have no cause for dissatisfaction; I have observed more moderation, apparently, than will ever be shown to me.

I have been told that the famous woman[3] whose work formed the subject of my letter has complained about one passage in it. I will take the liberty to remark that I was

[3] Madame de Staël.

not the first to use the arm for which I am criticized and which I detest; I only parried the blow aimed at a man whose talents I profess to admire and whose person I love dearly. But if I have given offense, I have gone too far, so let that passage be considered struck out. Besides, when one lives the brilliant life and has the talents of Mme de Staël, it must be easy to forget the little wounds which a hermit can inflict, or a man as unknown as I am.

I shall say a last word about *Atala*. If through some plan of exalted politics the French government should think one day of asking England to give back Canada, my description of New France would take on fresh interest. In conclusion, the subject is not one of my own invention at all: it is certain that there was a savage in the galleys and at the court of Louis XIV; it is certain that a French missionary did the things that I have recorded; it is certain that I found savages carrying the bones of their ancestors and a young mother exposing the body of her child on the branches of a tree. Certain other circumstances are also exact; but as they are not of general interest, I am excused from mentioning them.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

BIOGRAPHY

Moreau, P. *Chateaubriand.* Paris, 1927.

BACKGROUND

Babbitt, I. *Rousseau and Romanticism.* Boston, 1919.

Bédier, J. *Études Critiques.* Paris, 1903.

Chinard, G. *L'Amérique et le rêve exotique dans la littérature française au XVII^e et au XVIII^e siècle.* Paris, 1913.

———. *L'Exotisme américain dans l'œuvre de Chateaubriand.* Berkeley and Paris, 1918.

Fairchild, H. N. *The Noble Savage.* New York, 1928.

Hazard, P. "Chateaubriand," in Bédier and Hazard, *La Littérature française,* Vol. II. Paris, 1924.

Mornet, D. "Atala," in *Histoire des grandes œuvres de la littérature française.* Paris, 1925.

Souriau, M. *Histoire du romantisme en France,* Vol. I. Paris, 1927.

Tinker, C. B. *Nature's Simple Plan.* Princeton and Oxford, 1922.

TEXT

Chateaubriand. *Atala, première édition réimprimée* par V. Giraud. Paris, 1906.

Chatelain, H. "Les Critiques d'*Atala* et les corrections de Chateaubriand," in *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France,* 1902, pp. 414 ff.

Chinard, G. *Atala,* reprint of the definitive edition, with variants and notes. Paris, 1930.

Cloran, T. *Atala,* annotated edition. New York, 1911.

ICONOGRAPHY

Atala captured the fancy of painters of the romantic period in such wise that their paintings in illustration—particularly of the death of the heroine—have acquired a fame of their own. The chief example is *Les Funerailles d'Atala* (1808) in the smooth, graceful manner of David's pseudo-classic style, by Girodet-Trioson (1767–1824); it is now in the Louvre, and prints of it are common. The *Morte di Atala* of Cesare Mussini, in the Pitti Palace at Florence, is done in the most exaggerated romantic style, with a distinct attempt to give accurate Indian costume and local color.

THE STANFORD MISCELLANY

MARGERY BAILEY, *General Editor*

Chateaubriand's "Atala," Translated by Caleb Bingham, 1802
Edited by William Leonard Schwartz
Associate Professor of Romanic Languages, Stanford University

Letters of Sarah Byng Osborn, 1721–1723
Edited by John McClelland
Stanford University

For complete list to date, address

STANFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
STANFORD UNIVERSITY, CALIFORNIA

SONOMA
COUNTY
LIBRARY

to renew • para renovar

707.566.0281

sonomalibrary.org

S0-BKQ-468